Catherine III. Empress of Russia.

Taken from an Original Bust.

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HISTORY,

OF

ANECDOTES,

OF THE

REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA,

IN THE YEAR 1762.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. DE RULHIERE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. N. LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1797.

F.B.

Catherine II. Empress of Russia.

Taken from an Original Picture.

Fra. Beveridge's

THE

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OR

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Carl. 129

ADVERTISEMENT

BY THE EDITOR.

M. RULHIERE was at Peterſbourg at the period of the events which placed Catherine the Second on the throne of Ruſſia; he wrote the hiſtory of that tranſaction, at the ſolicitation of the Counteſs of Egmont, daughter of Marſhal de Richelieu, whom he had accompanied in his government in the rank of a gentleman. A ſhort time after his return to Paris, his manuſcript, which he had read in ſeveral companies, acquired ſome reputation. The events which had taken place in Ruſſia were ſtill the ſubject of converſation; and every perſon, as is cuſtomary, related them

them after his own manner. The court, which was intereſted in being inſtructed with accuracy and fidelity in the intrigues which placed Catherine II. on her huſband's throne, was deſirous alſo of hearing it read.

The Empreſs ſoon obtained a knowledge of it; ſhe gave orders to her agents at Paris, to employ all poſſible means to prevent the publication of this work; they made the author very conſiderable pecuniary offers, which were refuſed. Not being able to ſucceed, they wiſhed to employ authority. They addreſſed themſelves to the Duke of Aiguillon, who was then miniſter. M. de Sartines, the lieutenant of police, ſent for M. Rulhiere, and ſignified to him that he had orders to demand his manuſcript; he attempted to intimidate him, by menacing him with the Baſtille; but he who had reſiſted the means of corruption, was not intimidated by ſuch menaces. He replied to the lieutenant of police, that they might put him in the Baſtille,

Baſtille, and even take his manuſcript from him by force, but it would be an endleſs trouble, as it was written in his memory.

Theſe threats produced no effect. Monſieur, the King's brother, having been informed of them, took the author under his protection, appointed him ſecretary to his governments, and a ſhort time after procured for him the place of hiſtorian of Foreign Affairs, with orders to write the hiſtory of the anarchy of Poland; and permiſſion to ſearch in the office for foreign affairs for the materials which he might want. The Duke of Choiſeul even ſent him to reſide ſome time in that country.

The Empreſs's agents repeated their attempts; they even offered him 20,000 *livres*, if he would ſuppreſs ſome anecdotes, the publicity of which might injure the reputation of their ſovereign; he refuſed them, at the ſame time giving his word of honour,

that

that the work ſhould never be printed in the lifetime of the Empreſs.

M. de Montmorin, at the death of M. Rulhiere in 1791, engaged his brother to wait on M. Grim, the Empreſs's agent at Paris for her ſecret affairs, aſſuring him that he might make a very advantageous bargain for the manuſcript: he faithfully fulfilled his brother's intentions; and though the public papers frequently announced that a hiſtory of the revolution in Ruſſia was about to appear, his heirs waited for the death of the Empreſs, before they diſpoſed of the manuſcript with which they were entruſted.

PRE-

PREFACE,

OR

EPISTLE DEDICATORY,

TO

THE COUNTESS OF EGMONT,

DUTCHESS OF GUELDRES, *&c.*

MADAM,

THIS work belongs to you; I had, it is true, taken great pains to develope the moſt ſecret intrigues of the event which I have related; but I had no intention to write the hiſtory of it; your wiſh alone determined me to do it. And I have followed your taſte, even in the ſtyle which I have adopted, not having had any other model.

When I converſed with you and the Count of Egmont, on the Revolution which took place at Peterſbourg in 1762, on my

return from my travels, I was emboldened by that natural and happy gaiety which never deſerts you, to relate all the circumſtances of that terrible event, ſome of which, relative to the manners of the Ruſſian nation, were entertaining enough; and I then perceived that this affinity with thoſe manners, was the true point of view in which we ſhould regard that event. The frequent queſtions which both of you put to me, directed, if I may be allowed to ſay ſo, my narration, and forced me to mingle tenderneſs and ſprightlineſs with the moſt important and ſerious circumſtances. Such is, in fact, the nature of this Hiſtory, in which you wiſhed that I ſhould preſerve the ſame ſpirit and tone, which that converſation had given to my recital.

It is probable, indeed, that ſo extraordinary an event required a ſingular ſpecies of narrative. The importance of the various intereſts

intereſts concerned, ſince an Empire was the ſubject, the ſingularity of the action, the horror of the cataſtrophe, and the name of Catherine II. gave, it is certain, dignity and celebrity to that Revolution; but the frivolity of the intrigues, which were its main ſprings, the licentiouſneſs of the Ruſſian manners, and the puerilities which ruined the unfortunate Peter III. could not be related in an uniformly ſerious ſtyle: to have repreſented them by general characteriſtics, as that ſtyle would have required, would have been to expoſe the work to the hazard of being diſcredited; the neceſſity therefore of deſcribing them in detail, and if I may ſo ſay, of painting them in their proper colours, would have forced the graveſt author to deſcend to the tone of the moſt familiar memoirs. And if, while he related thoſe riſible anecdotes, he had not occaſionally himſelf

appeared to laugh the firſt, his gravity would have made him ridiculous.

Some cenſors may perhaps reproach me with having, in no part of a narrative of this nature, pronounced the names of virtue and vice, with giving no epithet to any of the principal actions, which might tend to make them be regarded as good or bad. I thought of nothing but painting them as they were: that manner, which produces ſuch happy effects in poetry, is not proper for hiſtory. He, who would wiſh to tranſmit to poſterity the memory of the good and evil which he has ſeen in his age, ought not merely to truſt to the impreſſion which a ſimple narrative may make on the mind of his readers. It is not merely ſentiments of admiration, of intereſt, or of pity, which ſhould be conſulted in order to judge of human actions; a certain grandeur is ſometimes found mingled

gled with vicious actions. There may be genius in crime, allurements in weakneſs, and heroiſm in the moſt fatal imprudence. It is too true, that on ſimilar ſuppoſitions, ſentiment would be a very indifferent judge; and it is in general the ſource of ſo many defective judgments, which ordinary readers inceſſantly paſs in the peruſal of hiſtory. But in the narration of a recent Revolution, it was eſſential that my reader ſhould not feel any diſtruſt. An epithet more or leſs ſevere, would have made me ſuſpected of partiality. Beſides, when I related to you for the firſt time, this long ſeries of anecdotes, neceſſarily connected together, by the relation they bore to the ſame event, I was careful to exhibit them in their proper light, without prejudicing your opinion. But I ſtudied with ſtill greater care all the movements related with a ſentiment of enthuſiaſm, and to deſcribe weakneſſes with in-

 dulgence,

dulgence, crimes with horror, and vices with ſome traits of ridicule.

One of the beſt precepts, which we have received from an eminent maſter in the art of writing, is to perſuade ourſelves that we ſhall have the greateſt men who have immortaliſed themſelves by their genius for our readers; to imagine, as we hold our pen, that we are in their preſence; and to aſk what Plato or Tacitus would ſay, if they heard the work read. I confeſs that inſtead of regarding thoſe great men, while I wrote this Hiſtory for you alone, it was in your preſence that I thought I was writing it. I followed then the true ſpirit of the precept, but in a leſs rigid manner. But ſince I impoſed the rule on myſelf in this narrative, to deſcribe and not to judge, permit me, Madam, to develope to you in this place my general opinions on the manners I have delineated.

There

There is no power known on earth more abſolute than that of the ſovereigns of Ruſſia: throughout their empire, their will is the only law; obedience the only morality. Their miſerable condition, however, will be ſeen here, and it will be learned how their power, by paſſing all the bounds preſcribed to man, has ruined itſelf, and is miſerably limited on all ſides; ſince it is obliged to obey the inſtruments it employs, the ſoldiers, ſuperſtition, and the national prejudices. It is then a true blindneſs which induces the greater number of princes to employ themſelves in forging ſuch chains. They forget, that in ceaſing to reſpect the will of a free people, they muſt ſooner or later obey the caprices of vulgar imbecility.

Whatever marks of ſkill and courage may be diſcovered in this Hiſtory, ought not to produce illuſion; and, if any of my readers have conceived an eſteem for a nation in

which ſuch men are found, I beg of them to remark that what they admire ariſes only from the habit of conſpiracy, from the hopes of making rapid fortunes; and that thoſe convulſions are always momentary. The whole ſtate really ſinks under the weight of the government; fear exiſts every where; diſtruſt is on the throne, but hope is at the gates of the palace. The firſt ſoldier, who beholds the gibbet without dread, ſees no bounds to his ambition; and ſome men of ſtrong minds, placed between the meanneſs of ſlavery and the audacity of conſpiracy, of neceſſity become atrocious; ſuch were the manners which began at Rome under the firſt Emperors. It appeared to me difficult to give credit to the hiſtory of thoſe deplorable times, but ſcarcely had I arrived in Ruſſia when all that Tacitus has painted, aſſumed in my eyes a new character of probability. The Ruſſians, in the progreſs of their civilization, gave me a feeble

a feeble notion of what Rome was at the time of its deſtruction; this ſad conformity ſtruck my eyes on all ſides. That ſuperſtitious and ſenſeleſs reſpect to their images, which the Roman Emperors exacted, produced nothing more memorable than the following event which happened in our days. In the year 1734, when the city of Peterſbourg was almoſt entirely deſtroyed by fire, (it was in the reign of the Empreſs Anne,) the quarter of the city which was firſt burned, communicated with a palace of wood, by means of a triumphal arch, alſo of wood, and the only mode by which the reſt of the city could be ſaved, was to throw down this miſerable monument: but the Ruſſian general, who commanded the troops ſent to aſſiſt, having diſcovered that there was an A, the firſt letter of the Empreſs's name, on the gate, did not dare to touch that ſacred ſymbol; he diſpatched a courier to the court, eight leagues diſtant,

diſtant, for orders; and whilſt he waited, the fire having gained ground by this communication, the palace and the city were reduced to aſhes.

I allow, that the ſovereigns of Ruſſia, ſeconded by the foreigners whom they have invited, have endeavoured, for ſome reigns, to civilize their nation, whereas the Neros and Domitians employed their whole power in bringing their's back to barbariſm. But there is an important obſervation to be made here; thoſe ancient tyrants, execrated by mankind, were conſiſtent in their deſtructive efforts; whereas the Ruſſian ſovereigns, deſirous of civilizing their nation, while they aggravated the deſpotiſm, with great labour performed contradictory actions. According to the expreſſion of a wiſe magiſtrate of Geneva, " wherever the greater number of " men are reduced to the point of having " neither will nor opinions, it is neceſſary to " deprive

" deprive them of all knowledge." This truth is inconteſtable. What ought we to think of thoſe Czars who are celebrated by ſo many panegyrics? Is it not evidently ſimilar to the deſign formed by Tiberius of old, when he wiſhed to be ſervilely obeyed by a ſenate, which ſtill retained ſome information and dignity, a deſign which has been tranſmitted to us as the chimera of a tyrant?

Thus the narrative which I have the honour of preſenting to you, Madam, is conſiſtent with all the notions we receive from hiſtory, and with all the principles of the beſt political writers; and this conformity may, with ſome minds, ſtand me inſtead of more poſitive proofs. But I have related ſuch remarkable anecdotes, that it may afford aſtoniſhment that they could have been known; and having no right to demand belief of ſuch important facts on my own mere aſſertion, I am bound to cite my authorities,

and

and the means of information which I have had. They are as follows: during a reſidence of fifteen months at the court of Ruſſia, where I was in the ſuite of the Baron of Breteuil, miniſter plenipotentiary from France, the confidence with which he honoured me, leaves no doubt that I was acquainted with all the circumſtances he himſelf knew; and through the extraordinary ſituation which he acquired by his addreſs, he had the confidence of all parties after the Revolution; before that epoch, he had poſſeſſed that of the two chief confidants of the Empreſs. My perſonal ſituation in the country brought me intimately acquainted with perſons who had reſided in it for forty years, and who, from their rank, had the moſt ſecret and certain information; among others, with M. d'Agenfeld, an honourable and wiſe old man, who had been employed under eleven ambaſſadors, ſince the latter years of Peter I.

The

The cuſtom of the government of Vienna being, to grant to its ſecretaries of embaſſy the ſingle recompence of augmenting their appointments, and to leave them to grow old in their employ, he had, to uſe the expreſſion, living archives in every country. The facts rapidly noticed in the characters of Biren, Munick, and Leſtock, happened during the embaſſy of Mr. de la Chetardie, all of whoſe diſpatches were entruſted to me; and many of theſe anecdotes were related to me by Field-marſhal Munick himſelf. May I be permitted to ſay, that the kindneſs which I experienced from that great man, ſtill appears to me the moſt valuable recompence of my travels. I had ſome connexion with the Princeſs of Aſchekof, and Odart, the Piedmonteſe; and a ſtill greater with Villebois, the grand-maſter of the artillery. In a word, of all thoſe I have mentioned in my narrative, there is not one with

whom I was not perſonally acquainted; and I paſſed the whole day of the Revolution either in the public places, or in the beſt informed ſocieties. The Empreſs herſelf related the circumſtance of the ſingular moment of her being waked, to the Count of Mercy ambaſſador to her court from Vienna; and I had that anecdote from him. The Empreſs's arrival at Peterſbourg, and her firſt movements, were related to me a few days after the Revolution, by Michel, her valet-de-chambre, who was in her train. Laſtly, the anecdote the knowledge of which appears the moſt aſtoniſhing, is the converſation which the Empreſs had with her miniſter in the cloſet. All that an indiſpenſable duty permits me to ſay on that ſubject is, that there is only a ſingle perſon of importance, and very high authority, between the miniſter and me.

I was not ignorant of the inconvenience of writing the hiſtory of my cotemporaries; but

but if ſuch a conſideration ought to have inſpired me with caution as to the uſe I ſhould make of this hiſtory, I ſhould entirely have forgotten it while I was compoſing the work.

I have ſaid with Cicero, "It is not ſuffi-"cient that all that you ſay ſhould be true; "you muſt have the courage to tell all the "truth." And according to a fine ſentiment of Mably's: "An hiſtorian ceaſes to "be a private man; he is the judge of na-"tions and of kings."

But while I wait for the moment of publiſhing this Hiſtory, however diſtant it may be, the copy which I have put into your hands, Madam, ſhall be the only one which ſhall go out of mine.

Your virtues leave me not the ſmalleſt alarm on account of this confidence; and who ought to be better acquainted with the reſpect due to ſovereigns, during their lives,

than

than you, Madam, to whom part of a ſovereignty ſtill remains, which has been a long time in the poſſeſſion of the houſe of Egmont, and who have an ancient right to the ſame reſpect, and a ſtill greater attached to your name?

I am, with the profoundeſt reſpect,

Your very humble

And obedient Servant,

PARIS, RULHIERE.
Feb. 10, 1768.

THE

THE

HISTORY,

OR

ANECDOTES,

OF THE

REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA,

IN THE YEAR 1762.

I was preſent at the revolution which precipitated the grandſon of Peter the Great from the throne of Ruſſia, and ſeated a female foreigner in his place. I ſaw that princeſs, who had eſcaped as a fugitive from the Palace on the ſame day, force her huſband to reſign at once his empire and his life. I knew all the actors in that terrible ſcene, in which, amidſt the moſt imminent

dangers, all the reſources of audacity and genius were developed; and having no perſonal intereſt in the ſpectacle, but travelling in order to underſtand the nature of different governments, I eſteemed it a fortunate circumſtance to ſee paſſing before my eyes, one of thoſe rare events which characteriſe a nation, and in which men are fully known.

Some anecdotes, of a leſs ſerious complexion, will be found in the following narrative; but I have not thought it proper to relate, in the ſame tone, the intrigues of young women and the inſurrection of an empire. A tragic author gives an uniform dignity to great events; he repreſents Nature only in her perfection: that is not my object, and the whole of this great picture will be painted after Nature herſelf.

It will be neceſſary, in the outſet, to explain the origin of the irreconcileable hatred which ſubſiſted between the Emperor and Empreſs; and it will at the ſame time be ſeen,

ſeen, by what a ſeries of ambitious deſigns, that princeſs at length perfected the moſt violent uſurpation.

Princeſs Catherine of Anhalt-Zerbſt paſſed the firſt years of her life in a ſtate of mediocrity: her father, the ſovereign of an inconſiderable ſtate, and a general in the king of Pruſſia's ſervice, inhabited a ſmall fortified town, where ſhe was educated in the midſt of the homage of a garriſon; and if, on her emerging from the ſtate of infancy, her mother ſometimes conducted her to court, for the purpoſe of gaining her ſome notice from the royal family, ſhe was ſcarcely diſtinguiſhed from the crowd of courtiers.

But a prince, to whom ſhe was nearly related, having been, by a ſeries of revolutions, invited into Ruſſia to ſucceed one day to the empire, and the great princeſſes of Europe having refuſed to unite their fate

with the heir of a throne ſo violently agitated, ſhe was choſen as his conſort. Her parents themſelves made her quit the worſhip in which ſhe had been educated, and embrace the Ruſſian religion; and it was expreſsly ſtipulated in the contract, that if the prince ſhould die without leaving any children by this marriage, that his wife ſhould inherit the empire.

Nature ſeemed to have formed her for the higheſt elevation. Her aſpect announced all that might be expected of her; and perhaps, before we proceed farther, the portrait of this celebrated woman will be beheld with pleaſure.

Her figure is noble and agreeable; her gait is haughty, and her perſon and deportment graceful. Her air is that of a ſovereign. All her features announce a great character. Her neck is long, and her head very lofty: the union of theſe two

parts

parts is remarkably beautiful, eſpecially in her profile; and ſhe takes ſome pains to diſplay this beauty in the motions of her head. She has a large and open forehead, and a noſe almoſt aquiline: her mouth is bewitching, and delightfully embelliſhed by her teeth: her chin is rather large, and a little double, although ſhe is not fat. Her hair is cheſnut, and of a ſtriking beauty; and her eye-brows brown; her eyes alſo are brown, and very lively; the reflection of the light gives them ſome ſhades of blue: her complexion is of a dazzling brilliancy. Haughtineſs is the true character of her phyſiognomy. The goodneſs and benevolence which are alſo ſeen in it, appear to penetrating eyes as the effect only of an extreme deſire of pleaſing; and thoſe ſeducing expreſſions ſuffer the deſire itſelf of ſeducing to be too plainly diſcovered. A painter, who was deſirous of expreſſing this character by an

allegory, propoſed to repreſent her under the figure of a charming nymph, who, with one hand, which ſhe holds out, preſents chains of flowers; and in the other, which ſhe keeps behind her, conceals a burning torch.

Married to the Great Duke at the age of fourteen, ſhe, from that time, perceived that ſhe ſhould govern her huſband's dominions. The aſcendant which ſhe eaſily acquired over that prince, by the influence of her charms, gave her a power with which her ambition was for ſome time ſatisfied. The nights, which they always paſſed together, did not ſeem ſufficient for the vivacity of their ſentiments; they eſcaped from their court during ſeveral hours of the day. The whole empire expected the birth of a ſecond heir, not imagining that all the time of two young perſons newly married, would be ſolely employed in performing the Pruſſian exerciſe, and

and ſtanding as ſentinels at the door with a muſket on their ſhoulders. The Great Ducheſs, when ſhe related theſe circumſtances ſome time after, added, " I thought " that I was fit for ſomething elſe." But ſhe governed her huſband at that time by preſerving a ſilence as to his ſtrange pleaſures, and accommodating herſelf to his humour with complaiſance. She endeavoured, on all occaſions, to conceal the follies of the prince; and expecting only to reign through him, ſhe ſtudied to prevent his being conſidered as unworthy of a throne.

Similar amuſements were not calculated to enſure a line of ſucceſſion to the ſtate; and the Empreſs Elizabeth wiſhed for one for her own ſecurity. She detained in priſon that young unfortunate, known by the name of the little Ivan; who, being dethroned at the age of fifteen months, was inceſſantly carried from one end of the empire to the

other, and from fortreſs to fortreſs, that his partiſans, if he had any, might always be ignorant where to find him. Elizabeth was the more praiſe-worthy in ſuffering him to live, inaſmuch as, knowing with what facility a revolution is effected in Ruſſia, ſhe never believed that the crown was ſecure on her head. She dared not ſleep before day, becauſe it was under favour of the night that a conſpiracy had placed herſelf on the throne. She was ſo much afraid of being ſurpriſed while at reſt, that ſhe carefully ſought through the empire for a man whoſe ſleep was the leaſt ſound; and this man, who fortunately was deformed, remained in the Empreſs's chamber all the time ſhe was in bed. In ſpite of ſo many alarms, ſhe yet permitted the only man who cauſed them to live. Even her relations were not ſeparated; and the report was, that in their priſon, they had had the conſolation, or perhaps the ſorrow,

row, of having ſeveral children; a dangerous circumſtance, as they were the eldeſt branch of the houſe of the Czars. The ſureſt precaution againſt them would have been, to ſhow this nation a long train of other heirs; this was the embarraſſment. Eight years had paſſed; and though nature had not denied the Great Duke all ſenſibility, yet perſons well informed on the ſubject proved, by inconteſtible reaſons, that this line of ſucceſſion muſt not be expected from him.

A young man of the court, one of the Counts Soltikof, whoſe figure was elegant, but whoſe talents were not formidable, was encouraged to become the lover of the Great Ducheſs. The Great Chancellor of Ruſſia was employed to inform her of it. She was irritated, and menaced him. She cited the article of her marriage contract, which, on failure of iſſue, ſecured her the throne. But when ſhe was informed that he had

had had this commiſſion from the very perſons to whom ſhe propoſed to complain, and was made ſenſible of the dangers to which ſhe expoſed the empire if ſhe did not take this precaution, and the reſolutions, more or leſs fatal, which the deſign of preventing thoſe dangers might cauſe to be taken againſt her, ſhe replied, "I underſtand you; bring "him here this evening."

As ſoon as her pregnancy was announced, the Empreſs Elizabeth gave the young Ruſſian an office in a foreign country. The Great Ducheſs wept, and ſought conſolation in a new choice. But the ſucceſſion appeared ſecured, and a new choice was diſpleaſing. Her conduct was watched with a ſtrictneſs which accorded neither with the general manners, nor with the perſonal behaviour of Elizabeth. In fact, though the Ruſſian ladies had been but of late admitted into ſociety; though at the end of the laſt century they

ſtill

ſtill lived in confinement, and were regarded as of no conſequence in domeſtic authority, yet the uſage of abſolute ſecluſion and of eunuchs not being eſtabliſhed in this country, a total depravation of manners reſulted from this captivity of the women in the midſt of a crowd of ſlaves: and when Peter the Firſt gave birth to civilization in the empire, he had only to reform an apparent auſterity in the manners, which were already very diſſolute. It was not thought that the laſt empreſſes had tarniſhed the glory of their reign, by chooſing a crowd of lovers from all ranks of their ſubjects, and even from among their ſlaves. Under the preſent reign, a young favourite governed the empire, while a mere Coſſack, whoſe firſt employ had been that of a muſician in the palace chapel, had attained to the honour of ſecretly marrying the Empreſs. This marriage was not aſtoniſhing in a country, where the ſovereigns,

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a few years ſince, allied themſelves indifferently with the loweſt families among their ſubjects: but a reaſon peculiar to this princeſs, prevented her from openly declaring it. Elizabeth had made it a matter of conſcience to leave her crown to her nephew, the deſcendant of an elder ſiſter; from this idea of juſtice, which ſhe preſerved in the midſt of her weakneſſes, aroſe the ſingularity of living without myſtery with her lovers and having a huſband in ſecret. It often happened that thoſe were ſeen elevated to leſs eminent ſituations, who had no other merit, than that of having pleaſed their ſovereign for a moment. But whether it proceeded from a ſecret envy, or from a ſcruple ariſing from having forced the Great Ducheſs into the firſt ſtep, every choice which ſhe appeared to make was oppoſed: even their obſcurity, for ſhe had recourſe to it alſo, did not reſcue them from the dread-

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ful exile of the country. She was reduced to deſpair, when fortune conducted to Ruſſia, Williams the Engliſh ambaſſador, a man of a bold imagination and a ſeducing converſation; who dared to ſay to her, "That gentleneſs was the merit of victims; "that ſilent intrigues, and hidden reſent- "ments, were worthy neither of her rank "nor her genius; that the greater number "of men were weak; and decided charac- "ters were always reſpected; that by "throwing off conſtraint, openly declaring "thoſe whom ſhe honoured with her favour, "and manifeſting that ſhe ſhould feel per- "ſonally offended with every attempt made "againſt them, ſhe would be able to live as "ſhe pleaſed." This converſation was ter- minated by preſenting to her a young Po- lander who was in his ſuite.

Count Poniatowſki had formed an intimate connection with this ambaſſador in Poland;

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ſo intimate indeed, that the one being very handſome and the other very depraved, ſlanderous reports had been circulated concerning them. Perhaps the accuracy of this detail belongs not to my ſubject; but M. de Poniatowſki having become a king, there is always pleaſure in recollecting the paths which lead to a throne. Allied by his mother to the moſt powerful family in Poland, he accompanied Williams, with the deſign of ſeeing a court ſo intereſting as the court of Warſaw; and already known by the elegance of his mind, he performed the functions of ſecretary to the embaſſy, for the purpoſe of inſtructing himſelf in buſineſs. It was upon this young ſtranger that, after a ſecret interview, to which the Great Ducheſs went in diſguiſe, ſhe conferred all the brilliant advantages of her favour. Poniatowſki, having made a journey into his own country, returned ſoon in the character

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of miniſter, which facilitated his approach to his miſtreſs. The decorum of rank ſtood in the ſtead of every other ſpecies of decorum: and this inviolable character gave to the bold part he was going to play, the ſacred protection of the law of nations.

However contemptible the Great Duke was, he was not ſo far degraded as to ſuffer himſelf any longer to be governed by his wife; but he loſt every thing by throwing off the yoke. Abandoned to himſelf, and, if we may ſo ſay, expoſed to view, he appeared what he really was in the eyes of all. Never had fortune placed a prince in more advantageous circumſtances; from his earlieſt infancy Sovereign of Holſtein, he had alſo the choice of two other crowns. It is well known that the Dukes of Holſtein, for a long time oppreſſed by Denmark, where the elder branch of the family reigned, have,

in their turns, intereſted all the powers which have riſen up in the North in their quarrel; and by a well-grounded policy, in marrying, as the times permitted, princeſſes of Sweden and Ruſſia, have at length aſcended both thoſe thrones. Both of them were offered to Prince Peter, who, uniting in his own perſon the blood of Charles XII. and Peter I. beheld himſelf, at the ſame time, elected heir of Sweden, by the ſtates of that nation, and invited into Ruſſia by the Czarina as her ſucceſſor. When he choſe the empire, he procured, by his influence, the crown of Sweden for his uncle; ſo that his houſe owes to him the great ſplendor which it enjoys, in occupying at preſent all the thrones of the North; but by a cruel ſport of deſtiny, after having appeared to labour for two centuries to prepare ſo high an elevation for that prince, ſhe brought him into the world entirely unworthy of it.

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In order to underſtand fully his ſtrange character, it is neceſſary to know that his infancy had been entruſted to two men of extraordinary merit, but who were guilty of the error of educating him on the greateſt models, conſidering rather his fortune than his genius. When he was invited into Ruſſia, theſe two men, of a character too ſevere for that court, excited an alarm againſt the ſolid education which they continued to give him; he was taken out of their hands, and delivered over to vile corrupters: but the firſt principles, which he had received, remained engraven on his mind; thence proceeded a fantaſtical mixture of good intentions degenerated into ridiculous manners, and ſilly views directed towards great objects. Educated in a dread of ſlavery, a love of equality, and a paſſion for heroiſm, he was ſtrongly attached to thoſe noble ſentiments; but though he loved greatneſs he was himſelf little, and propoſing to imitate the heroes from whom he was

deſcended, his genius kept him in the midſt of puerilities. He affected to take pleaſure in the loweſt functions of the ſoldiery, becauſe Philip the Firſt had paſſed through every military rank; and purſuant to this idea, ſo aſtoniſhing in a ſovereign, of marking the progreſs of his inſtruction by the degrees of his advancement, he boaſted in the concerts of his court, that he had formerly ſerved the muſicians, and had raiſed himſelf to be firſt violin by his talents. He exhibited a ſpecies of military mania through the whole courſe of his life; his favourite paſſion was to command at the military exerciſes; and in order that he might conſtantly have that pleaſure without exciting the murmurs of the Ruſſian regiments, they gave up to him the unfortunate Holſtein ſoldiers, whoſe ſovereign he was. His figure, which was naturally ridiculous, became more ſo in a dreſs in which he had caricatured the Pruſſian faſhion. The ſpatterdaſhes which he conſtantly wore were

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ſo tight that he could ſcarcely move his knees, and he was obliged to ſit down and walk without bending them. An immenſe hat, fantaſtically cocked, covered a ſmall face which was ugly and malicious, but of a lively phyſiognomy: he took pleaſure alſo in diſfiguring himſelf by perpetual grimaces, with which he amuſed himſelf. His underſtanding was not, however, entirely deficient in quickneſs, and talents of ſome extent for buffoonery were diſcovered in him. One action of the prince made his character completely known. He had ill-treated one of his courtiers without any cauſe; and as ſoon as he was convinced of his injuſtice, he propoſed, by way of reparation, to fight a duel with him. Whatever were the intentions of the courtier, a man of cunning and addreſs, he accompanied the prince into the heart of a wood, where both drawing their ſwords at ten paces from each other, they made ſeveral

thruſts without coming any nearer; on a ſudden the prince made a ſtop, and ſaid, "It "is a pity that two ſuch brave men ſhould "cut each other's throats; let us embrace." Mutually complimenting each other, they returned by the road they came, when the courtier perceiving a great number of perſons, haſtily exclaimed, "Ah, Sir, you "are wounded in the hand, take care "that the blood is not ſeen;" and immediately wrapped up his hand in a handkerchief. The Great Duke imagining that the man really thought he was wounded, did not undeceive him, but made a public parade of his courage in bearing a wound, and to ſhew his generoſity, took the courtier into the greateſt favour.

It is ſeen with what facility paraſites may gain an influence over ſuch a prince. He ſoon found among the maids of honour a miſtreſs truly worthy of him. But what may excite

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aſtoniſhment is, that his greateſt favourite, his aid-de-camp Goudowitz, for whom his friendſhip never varied, was an honourable man and loved him ſincerely.

The young court began then to be in open diviſion, when one night in a country ſeat, Poniatowſki, about to enter the apartment of the Great Dutcheſs, fell into the hands of the injured huſband. The lover, miniſter of a foreign court, in the peril which threatened him, aſſerted the reſpect due to his character; and the prince, who beheld in this adventure a rupture between two courts, dared not take any ſtep himſelf, but having committed Poniatowſki to the cuſtody of a guard, he diſpatched a courier to the favourite who governed the empire. The Great Dutcheſs, making head againſt the danger, came to her huſband, and avowed every thing with audacity, repreſenting how vexatious, and probably fatal for him, the pub-

licity of ſuch an adventure would be. She juſtified herſelf by reminding him of the miſtreſs which he kept with the knowledge of the whole empire. She promiſed that for the future ſhe would treat that lady with the reſpect which her pride had hitherto refuſed her; and as the Great Duke's ſoldiers exhauſted his revenues, and did not leave him the power of making his miſtreſs's ſituation more agreeable, ſhe engaged, in a converſation with her, to grant her an annual penſion. The Great Duke, aſtoniſhed at the aſcendant ſhe ſtill retained over him, and at the ſame time ſolicited by his miſtreſs, connived at Poniatowſki's eſcape, and endeavoured to prevent the public detection which he had intended.

The Great Dutcheſs having acquired from this event, which was calculated to ruin her, a ſtill greater ſecurity, and the opportunity of keeping in her pay the miſtreſs of her huſband,

huſband, was emboldened to new deſigns, and began publicly to produce proofs of the folly of the prince with as much care as hitherto ſhe had taken to conceal them. She had entirely changed her ſyſtem; and from this time her whole ambition reſting on her ſon, ſhe meditated the means of placing the crown on the head of that child, and of ſecuring the regency for herſelf; a ſagacious project, and in the ſtricteſt conformity to the laws of the empire. But it was neceſſary that Elizabeth herſelf ſhould abandon her nephew; and how was it poſſible to prevail on a mild, irreſolute, and ſuperſtitious princeſs to do this, who one day, when ſigning a treaty of alliance with a foreign court, did not complete her ſignature, becauſe a waſp lighted on her pen, and who reſpected in her nephew the ſame rights to which ſhe herſelf had made ſucceſsful pretenſions? There remained one reſource at

her death, viz. the forgery of a will, an expedient not without example among ſovereigns themſelves, and by which Adrian ſucceeded Trajan.

But while this intrigue was in preparation, a revolution in the general affairs of Europe deprived the Great Dutcheſs of a confidant neceſſary to her deſigns, the Great Chancellor Beſtuchef, whom the change in the alliances of his court drove from his office. His exile brought on the departure of Count Poniatowſki, whoſe recal was demanded of the king his maſter; and the Great Dutcheſs, plunged in the moſt profound ſorrow, having in vain thrown herſelf in tears at the feet of the Empreſs, to implore the reſtoration of her lover, and looked upon even by Elizabeth with jealous diſquietude, began to live at court as in a deſert.

In this manner ſhe paſſed ſeveral years, having no connections but with young women,

men, who, like her, had been enamoured of Polanders; and who were not well received at the old court, on account of the charms of their perſons. She roſe every morning by day-break, and gave up whole days to the peruſal of good French books, never employing much time either at her table or her toilet: but it was at this period ſhe laid the foundation of all her greatneſs. She has been heard to confeſs, that ſhe then learned all ſhe knew of the art of intrigue, from one of her female attendants, who had the moſt ſimple and indolent aſpect. It was at this time that ſhe ſecured friends for the time of need; that all the perſons of importance perſuaded themſelves, that by the ſecret ties ſhe had formed with them, they would become ſtill more important if ſhe ſhould poſſeſs the government; and that, the veil of a great but unfortunate paſſion, concealing ſome conſolatory

ſolatory adventures, many had reaſon to believe that they ſhould occupy the poſt of favourite at her court. Such was the poſition of affairs when the Empreſs Elizabeth died, on the 5th of January 1762.

Before ſhe had recourſe to the great deſigns ſhe meditated, ſhe once more, at that time, attempted to regain her authority by the gentleſt means. The miniſters, the confeſſor, the lover, and the valets, were all employed to inſpire the dying Empreſs with the deſire of reconciling the Great Duke and his wife. This project ſucceeded; and the Great Duke, in the embarraſſment of the moment, appeared to reſtore her to his ancient confidence. She had perſuaded him not to cauſe himſelf to be proclaimed by the regiments of the guards; "That the cuſtom "was a relic of ancient barbariſm; that it "was more worthy of the modern Ruſſians, "that their ſovereign ſhould be acknow-

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" ledged by the ſenate;" being certain that in a government where there were any forms, ſhe ſhould be able ſoon to bring all over to her wiſhes. The miniſters had been gained, and the ſenators prepoſſeſſed. She compoſed the diſcourſe which the Emperor was to deliver. But as ſoon as Elizabeth expired, Peter, in the height of his joy, ſhowed himſelf with eagerneſs to his guards, and by their proclamation, aſſuming as a deſpot an abſolute dominion, broke all the ſhackles which were prepared for him; eſcaped for ever from his wife's authority, gave himſelf up daily to freſh reſentments againſt her, almoſt diſavowed her ſon, by not acknowledging him as his ſucceſſor, and left no reſource to Catherine but her audacity and her friends.

Peter the Third began his reign by an edict, in which, by his full deſpotic power, he granted to the Ruſſian nobility the rights

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of a free people; and, as if the rights of nations depended on ſimilar conceſſions, this edict, in effect, produced ſuch immoderate tranſports of joy, that this vain nation propoſed to erect to him a ſtatue of maſſy gold. But this liberty, whoſe name they for the firſt time heard, and whoſe rights ſuch a prince was incapable of deſcribing, was only the illuſion of a moment. The will of the ſovereign, without any forms, continued to be the only law; and the nation, impreſſed with the confuſed notion of a good which they knew not, was afflicted at the deception.

The artiſt, whoſe office it was to engrave for the new coinage, came to preſent his deſign to the Emperor. He had attempted, while he preſerved the character of the Emperor's features, to give them a noble appearance. A laurel branch lightly adorned long treſſes of flowing hair. He rejected the

the deſign; exclaiming, " I ſhall reſemble " the king of France." He choſe to be repreſented in his natural deformity; his head dreſſed like a ſoldier, and in a mode ſo little conformable to the majeſty of the throne, that the money became an object of ridicule, and ſpreading itſelf over the empire, gave the firſt blow to the people's reſpect for their Sovereign.

At the ſame time, he recalled from Siberia that crowd of unfortunates, with whom it had been attempted, for ſo many years, to people that deſert country; and his court preſented a ſpectacle which ages will never perhaps re-exhibit.

Biren was ſeen to re-appear; that Biren, who formerly a domeſtic of the Dutcheſs of Courland, and brought into Ruſſia by that princeſs when ſhe began her reign, roſe, as the lover of the ſovereign, to the exerciſe of the chief authority: but though he attained

tained it by ſuch gentle means, he governed with a ſceptre of iron. He put to death eleven thouſand perſons in nine years. Under this dreadful government, the empire reached its ſummit of glory, becauſe all the departments of the adminiſtration, all the commands, and all employs, were filled at that period by illuſtrious foreigners, whom Peter I. had formerly collected in his travels. Long labours had placed them at the head of every department; and Biren, a foreigner as well as they, reſtrained their ambition by a ſevere yoke, and made the whole Ruſſian nation bend beneath their authority. Forcibly made ſovereign of Courland, whoſe nobility, ſome years before, had refuſed to admit him into their order, he wiſhed moreover to be created regent of the Ruſſian empire, with an unlimited power. His expiring miſtreſs, who had choſen an infant, a few weeks old, as her ſucceſſor, ſaid to

him, with tears in her eyes, " Biren, you " are ruining yourſelf;" but ſhe had the weakneſs to nominate him. Every thing was provided for that moment. He had, a ſhort time previouſly, puniſhed with death all thoſe exiles whom he feared, that he might be enabled to ſhow himſelf indulgent with impunity on his advancement to the regency. He had given up to the public vengeance a victim, in the perſon of one of his confidants, whom he cauſed to be puniſhed, with a gag in his mouth; and whom he accuſed of all the enormities of the reign. He was on the point of ſecuring the empire, but the firſt attempt againſt him was his ruin. Three weeks of ſovereign authority coſt twenty years of exile. He returned at the commencement of old age, which had deprived him neither of his beauty nor ſtrength; but his features were hard and ſevere. On the ſummers evenings, he walked,

walked, almoſt alone, through the ſtreets of that city where he had reigned, and in which, every perſon he met had to demand of him the blood of a brother or a friend. He deſigned returning yet to his own country as a ſovereign; and when Peter the Third was dethroned, Biren ſaid, "that the real fault "of that prince was his indulgence; and "that the Ruſſians ſhould be governed only "with the rod and the axe."

Field Marſhal Munick, gentleman to Count d'Oldembourg, and formerly lieutenant of infantry in the armies of Eugene and Marlborough, by both of whom he was diſtinguiſhed, who had overthrown Biren, alſo returned. This man becoming an excellent engineer, as ſoon as chance threw into his hands, during the leiſure of winter-quarters, ſome torn and ſcattered leaves of a bad French treatiſe on geometry, ſoon raiſed himſelf above the crowd of men of genius whom

whom Peter the Great had aſſembled in his dominions, and acquired great celebrity in Ruſſia for having conſtructed the canal which connects Peterſburg with ancient Moſcow; but he is better known in the reſt of Europe by his victories over the Poles, the Tartars, and the Turks.

After he had taken the town of Dantzick, from which place King Staniſlaus, whom he had beſieged, had eſcaped, Biren, who then governed, had him tried by a ſtate inquiſition, on an accuſation founded on that eſcape. Munick having juſtified himſelf, reſerved his reſentment; and eight years afterwards, Ivan's relations propoſing to him to enter into the court intrigue againſt the Regent Biren, as a reply, he took their guard, went up to the palace, and bound the regent in chains. He gave the title to the Emperor's mother, and under the name of that princeſs, he governed the empire for ſome time. But

in conſequence of the hatred of that haughty woman, he retired with honour, and enjoyed repoſe with dignity. His retreat not preventing his being arreſted and condemned with the other miniſters at the acceſſion of Elizabeth, he aſcended the ſcaffold, on which he was condemned to be quartered, with tranquillity, and received his pardon with the ſame expreſſion of countenance. He was conducted into Siberia, and carefully guarded in an iſolated houſe in the centre of a marſh, whence his menaces, and ſometimes his very name, alarmed the governors of the neighbouring countries; and the art to which he was indebted for his firſt elevation, became the amuſement of his long ſolitude. He returned from his exile at the age of ninety-two years, a very handſome old man, not knowing that he had a ſon yet living; but thirty-three of his deſcendants united in advancing to receive him; and at that meet-

ing, this man, whom ſuch various fortune had not affected, was aſtoniſhed at the circumſtance of his ſhedding tears.

From the moment in which Munick had enchained Biren, contending with him for the ſupreme rank, the firſt time that theſe two men had met was in the gay and tumultuous crowd which ſurrounded Peter III. and that Emperor calling to them, wiſhed to perſuade them to drink together. He ordered three glaſſes to be brought, but while he was taking his, a perſon came and ſpoke to him in a low voice; he drank as he liſtened, and went away in conſequence of what he heard. The two ancient enemies remained face to face, each with his glaſs in his hand, without ſaying a word, fixing their eyes on the place which the Emperor had quitted; and ſhortly flattering themſelves that he had forgotten them, both ſtood ſtill, and meaſured each other with their eyes;

and returning their glaſſes full as they were, turned their backs and departed.

After them appeared Count Leſtock, who had ruined the Regent and crowned Elizabeth. This man, who was born in the Hanoverian States, having ſtudied ſurgery in Paris, where he had been ſent to the Baſtille, came into Ruſſia to ſeek his fortune, and ſoon cauſed himſelf to be baniſhed to Siberia. Being recalled from that firſt exile, and made ſurgeon to the Princeſs Elizabeth, he perſuaded her that ſhe had a claim to the throne, laboured for a whole year in the formation of a party for her, and ſucceeded by his ſingle exertions in intereſting Sweden and Pruſſia in her favour; but ſeeing that he was diſcovered, and that Elizabeth, in ſuch imminent danger, thought of no other reſource than an abandonment of all her projects, he drew on a card that princeſs with her head ſhaved, and himſelf on a wheel; and

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on the other ſide, the princeſs on a throne, and himſelf on the frontiers, decorated with a large ribband; and ſhowing theſe two reverſes, he exclaimed, "To night the one, "or to-morrow the other." He led her that ſame night to the palace, eſcorted by a hundred veteran ſoldiers, who had ſerved under Peter the Great, whoſe daughter ſhe was. When they arrived at the firſt guard, a drummer began to beat the alarm, but either Leſtock or the princeſs cut the drum-head with a knife, and they afterwards always diſputed the honour of this preſence of mind. The ſentinel, who guarded the chamber of the infant Emperor, ſtopped Elizabeth, pointing his bayonet to her cheſt. Leſtock exclaimed, "Wretch, what "are you about? aſk pardon of your Em-"preſs;" and the ſentinel fell at her feet. After having thus ſeated the princeſs whom he ſerved, on the throne, being always go-

verned by his intriguing genius, and conſtantly wiſhing to negotiate with foreign powers, his ruin was eaſily effected by the miniſters. When, on his return, the conſpiracy of the Empreſs Catherine broke out, nothing could equal the chagrin of this man, that there ſhould be a conſpiracy in his time in which he was not concerned; and he remarked with a malignant joy, the imprudence of theſe young conſpirators.

Thus each day beheld the arrival of perſonages, intereſting at leaſt on account of their long ſufferings; and the court of Peter the Third was filled with a multitude who owed him more than life. But it was filled at the ſame time with ancient enmities and irreconcilable intereſts. All theſe exiles, having been plundered at the period of their diſgrace, demanded the reſtoration of their fortunes: they were conducted into the immenſe magazines, in which, accord-

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ing to the cuſtom of the country, were preſerved all the confiſcations, the ſad depoſits of the ruins of favourites, where all the ſpoils of theſe famous wrecks were arranged in the order of time. They ſought in the duſt for their valuable moveables, their diamond inſignia, preſents which kings themſelves had formerly made them to purchaſe their influence; and too often they diſcovered them, after fruitleſs reſearches, in the poſſeſſion of the favourites of the laſt reign.

Peter the Third haſtened his ruin by actions good in themſelves, and moſt of thoſe which led to his deſtruction only became faulty through his precipitation, and have ſince been performed by his wife with glory and ſucceſs. It was advantageous to the empire that the prieſts ſhould be ſtripped of their immenſe riches; and after his fall, Catherine, gaining over ſome chiefs among the clergy, by giving them in individual penſions

more than ſhe deprived them of in the general ſpoil, eaſily executed this dangerous ſcheme. But Peter the Third, who decreed it by a pure act of deſpotiſm, without taking any previous precautions, ſhocked that ſuperſtitious people, and the prieſts, whoſe principal riches conſiſted in their peaſant ſlaves, excited them to revolt, and promiſed the ſeditious prayers and abſolution.

This princeſs laid the foundation of the credit ſhe enjoys in Europe, and of the authority ſhe exerciſes in the ſtates bordering on her dominions, on her connection with the King of Pruſſia, and this connection, the work of her huſband, excited againſt him a juſt indignation. In fact, while Ruſſia, in league with the greateſt powers in Europe, carried on a bloody and obſtinate war with the King of Pruſſia, Peter, infected with a ſilly paſſion for heroiſm, had ſecretly accepted the title of colonel in his ſervice, and

betrayed

betrayed to him all the deſigns of the confederates. As ſoon as he became emperor, he openly ſtiled him "the King my "Maſter;" and that hero, who approached the limits of his fate, when it was not poſſible to conceive how the aſtoniſhing reſources of his genius had prevented his deſtruction, ſaw on a ſudden his affairs re-eſtabliſhed by this fortunate chance; the Ruſſians, his conquerors, entered into his armies, and he gave, in exchange, the rank of general to the Emperor. But the Ruſſian nation, even while they obeyed, were indignant at the idea that they muſt ſtill be ſhedding blood to repair the effects of their own victories; and being accuſtomed for ſo many years to a hatred of the Pruſſian name, they ſaw in their maſter nothing more than the ally of their enemy.

Peter, inceſſantly augmenting their diſcontents, ſent to the ſenate thoſe new laws, the collection of which has been called

Frederic's

Frederic's code, having been made by the King of Pruſſia for his dominions. An order was iſſued, that they ſhould be obſerved throughout Ruſſia. But whether it aroſe from ignorance in the tranſlators, or from the inability of the Ruſſian language to expreſs all the ideas of juriſprudence, there was not a ſenator to be found who could underſtand the work; and the Ruſſians regarded this vain attempt in no other light, than as a marked contempt for all their cuſtoms, and a frivolous attachment to foreign manners. A ſimilar attachment is certainly not altogether unneceſſary among a people who are entirely without laws, and amongſt whom it is an allowed form, in criminal proceſſes, to beat the accuſed till he confeſſes his crime; and if he perſiſts in denying the fact, to beat the accuſer till he retracts his teſtimony. It was undoubtedly the duty of a ſovereign to reſcue his people from

from ſuch a ſtate of barbarity; and ſince the deſigns ſo fooliſhly undertaken by this prince, were afterwards ſo wiſely put in execution by his wife, there is reaſon to believe that they had been concerted between them at the time of their intimacy. But let us leave to politicians the taſk of comparing two adminiſtrations ſo different, though founded on the ſame principles; of remarking what care that princeſs conſtantly takes, while ſhe is ſubverting all the Ruſſian cuſtoms, to keep out of ſight that ſhe is a foreigner; and laſtly, of examining if the very attempts which ruined the Emperor have not facilitated the execution of the projects in which he failed, by his ſucceſſor.

Diſcontent ſoon ſhewed itſelf among the guards, the true maſters of the throne. Thoſe regiments, habituated for a long ſeries of years to the tranquil ſervice of the palace, under the government of the women who had

had ſucceſſively reigned, received an order to accompany the Emperor to a diſtant war, and regretting their reſidence in the capital, they prepared for departure much againſt their inclinations; a diſpoſition approaching nearly to ſedition, and very favourable to thoſe who wiſh to excite troops to inſurrection. The Emperor was going to lead them into Holſtein, with the reſolution of employing his new power in the avengement of the injuries which his anceſtors had ſuffered from Denmark, and in the reſtoration of her extent and independence to his ancient country; what flattered him moſt in this expedition was, that he was to have an interview with the King of Pruſſia on his route; the rendezvous was appointed. All the ſtates began to apprehend that this hero would uſe his whole aſcendant over his fanatic admirer, and would ſoon have under his command an army of a hundred thouſand Ruſſians; and

all

all Europe, attentive to this event, ſaw itſelf menaced with a revolution.

In the mean time, the city appeared to be occupied only with feſtivals; the ſolemnities of peace were celebrated amidſt the preparations for war. A licentious joy reigned in the palace; for the time for the departure of the army approaching, the court, on the eve of ſeparation, was fearful of admitting a ſingle day's interval in their pleaſures. The Ruſſian nation is indolent, gay, and diſſolute; and though the mildneſs of the laſt reign gave ſome poliſh to their minds, and ſome decency to their manners, the time is not far diſtant when that barbarous people celebrated, by a feſtival, the nuptials of a buffoon and a ſhe-goat. The new court eaſily then aſſumed the air of a rejoicing ſoldiery. Six months of this reign were a continual revel. Charming women

inflamed

inflamed themſelves with Engliſh beer and the ſmoke of tobacco; and were not permitted by the Emperor to return to their homes for a ſingle inſtant of the day: overpowered with fatigue and watching, they ſlept lying on ſophas in the midſt of theſe noiſy orgies. The actreſſes and public dancers, all foreigners, were admitted to their public feaſts; and upon a complaint made by his miſtreſs in the name of the ladies of the court, the Emperor replied, "that there "was no rank among women." Even during the licentiouſneſs of thoſe banquets, and in the moſt intimate familiarity with the Ruſſians, he manifeſted his contempt for them by perpetual mockeries. A fantaſtic mixture of juſtice and vicious manners, of greatneſs and folly, was ſeen at his court. Two of his deareſt favourites having ſold their influence with him, he beat them violently with his hands, took to his own uſe

the

the money they had received, and continued to treat them with his uſual favour. A foreigner coming to him to denounce ſome ſeditious diſcourſes, he replied, that he hated informers, and ordered him to be puniſhed. To the debaucheries of the court ſucceeded the violent exerciſes with which he haraſſed the ſoldiers. His military mania no longer kept any bounds: he wiſhed that a perpetual noiſe of cannon ſhould give him in repreſentation a foretaſte of war: the noiſe of a beſieged city was heard in his peaceable capital. He one day ordered them to let him hear a hundred large pieces of cannon fired at once; and it was neceſſary, in order to prevent the execution of this whim, to repreſent to him that it would ſhake the city to the centre. He often roſe from table to proſtrate himſelf on his knees, with a glaſs in his hand, before a portrait of the King of Pruſſia, exclaiming, "My brother, we

"will

" will conquer the univerſe together." He took into ſingular favour that prince's envoy. He was deſirous that this perſon ſhould enjoy all the young women of the court, previous to his departure for the war. He ſhut him up with them, and ſtood as guard at the door, with a drawn ſword in his hand; and at one of thoſe moments the Great Chancellor of the empire having arrived to tranſact ſome buſineſs, he ſaid to him, " Go, and give in your accounts to " Prince George; you ſee that I am a " ſoldier." Prince George, of the houſe of Holſtein, was one of his uncles, who had been lieutenant-general in Pruſſia, and to whom he ſometimes publicly ſaid, " Uncle, " you are not a very good general, the king " has diſmiſſed you." Whatever might be his ſentiments of contempt, he yet truſted every thing to that prince, from an early ſentiment of love for his family. He was

deſirous,

deſirous, at the moment of his dethrone-ment, of conferring a ſovereignty on him, having already compelled Biren to cede to him what the latter termed his rights to the Dutchy of Courland; and from the firſt day of his reign, liſtening with diſinclination to an honourable ſentiment, he invited to his court the princes and princeſſes of that numerous houſe, much to the regret of the Ruſſians.

All eyes were turned on the Empreſs; but that princeſs, in appearance, iſolated and tranquil, gave no room for ſuſpicion. During the obſequies of the late Empreſs, ſhe gained the hearts of the people, by a rigorous devotion, and a ſcrupulous fidelity in the obſervance of the rites of the Greek religion, abounding more with ceremonies than with morality. She endeavoured to procure the love of the ſoldiers, by the only means which her ſolitude permitted, by

queſtioning the ſentinels with affability, and giving them her hand to kiſs. One evening, as ſhe was walking in a dark gallery, the ſentinel having ſaluted her with his arms, ſhe aſked him how he knew her? He replied, in the Ruſſian ſtyle, a little in the Oriental manner: "Our mother! who would not "know thee? thou lighteſt every place "where thou art." She ſent this ſoldier a piece of gold; and her emiſſary brought him over to her faction. Ill-treated by the Emperor, every time that ſhe was obliged to appear at court, ſhe ſeemed to expect the utmoſt violence. She was ſeen occaſionally, in public, letting fall tears, as if in ſpite of her efforts to reſtrain them; endeavouring to make the general pity an inſtrument in her favour. Her ſecret partizans ſpread the report of her danger; and ſhe, in fact, appeared reduced to ſuch a deſolate ſtate, and fallen into ſuch diſcredit, that ſhe had even

See Three Letters p. 251.

loſt

with artifice, to diſpoſe them to inſurrection, were remarked among the people. It was the ſilent agitation which precedes a ſtorm; and the public expected with anxiety ſome great event which would produce a total change, hearing it ſaid, in all quarters, that the ruin of the Empreſs was certain; but alſo perceiving that a revolution was approaching. In the midſt of the general intereſt in favour of the Empreſs, what made every one tremble for her was, that no rallying point was diſcovered in her favour; no chief was perceived; the weakneſs of the great, and want of vigour in all the perſons who were known, did not permit them to caſt their eyes on any one. The whole movement, in fact, was produced by a man who was hitherto unknown, and had not fixed the public attention.

Orlof, the handſomeſt man in the North, of a moderate family, a gentleman, if you

will, from the poſſeſſion of ſome peaſant ſlaves, his brothers being ſoldiers in the regiments of guards, had been choſen as aid-de-camp by the grand maſter of the artillery, the moſt oſtentatious of Ruſſians. The cuſtom of the country is for the generals at all times to retain their aids-de-camp about their perſons; they guard their anti-chambers, follow their carriage on horſeback, and form the interior ſociety of their houſe. The advantage of a handſome perſon, which had promoted Orlof, was ſoon the cauſe of his diſgrace. The Princeſs Kourakine, one of the moſt ſeductive beauties of the court, a fair brunette, of a clear complexion and lively turn, was, in public, the miſtreſs of the general, and in private, of the aid-de-camp. The general was too vain to be jealous, but he was obliged to yield to evidence; he had the misfortune to ſurpriſe them together.

ther. The aid-de-camp was diſmiſſed, and he was on the point of being baniſhed for ever to the deſerts of Siberia, when an inviſible hand reſcued him from ruin: it was the Great Dutcheſs. The rumour of this adventure reached her in the retreat in which ſhe lived, before the death of the Empreſs Elizabeth. All that ſhe was told of this handſome unfortunate, made her eſteem him worthy her protection; and beſides the princeſs Kourakine is ſo well known, that the lover whom ſhe has choſen, may be always taken blindfold. Catherine Ivanouwena, an adroit and favourite waiting-maid, managed the intrigue, and took all the precaution which the greateſt diſtruſt could ſuggeſt; and Orlof, beloved by a beautiful unknown, far from ſuſpecting the whole extent of his good fortune, found himſelf already the happieſt of men. It may be aſked if he was more ſo,

when at length he ſaw, amidſt the pomp of a public ceremony, the beauty whom he adored, on the throne. His life was not the leſs paſſed in obſcurity. Whether it proceeded from taſte, from habit, or a planned deſign, he lived only with ſoldiers; and though at the death of the general who had perſecuted him, ſhe procured him the poſt of treaſurer of the artillery, an office which conferred on him a captain's rank, he did not change his mode of life; and his cheſt ſerved no other purpoſe, than to procure him more friends among the troops. He however attached himſelf to the purſuit of his miſtreſs; he was found every where in her preſence, and yet no intrigue was ever conducted with more art and reſerve. In a diſtruſtful court, ſhe was never ſuſpected. It was only when Orlof was ſuddenly raiſed to the ſupreme rank, that the courtiers confeſſed their fault in not having

ing perceived it: they then recollected marks of ſecret intelligence; they cited occaſions which ſhould have enlightened them. But there reſults only from theſe tardy remarks, that the two lovers had long had the pleaſure of a good underſtanding, without their connexion being betrayed. Thus lived the Great Dutcheſs, while all Europe vaunted both the inflexibility of her heart, and her almoſt romantic conſtancy.

The Princeſs of Aſchekoff was the youngeſt of three celebrated ſiſters: one of them is that Counteſs Boutourline, whoſe travels have made her beauty, her wit, and her gallantries, known in ſo many places: the other, Elizabeth Woronſof, is that miſtreſs, whom the Great Duke found among the *frail* ones of the court, or the maids of honour. All three were nieces of the new Great Chancellor, who, having ſo far puſhed his fortune by thirty years of ſervices, of

aſſiduities,

aſſiduities, and compliance, enjoyed it in luxury and debauchery, and had nothing to give his nieces but his credit. The two eldeſt were placed at court, and the youngeſt was educated wiih him. She there ſaw all the foreign miniſters; but from the age of fifteen, ſhe would not converſe with any but the miniſters of republics. She loudly complained of the Ruſſian deſpotiſm, and announced her intention of going to reſide in Holland, whoſe civil liberty and religious toleration ſhe admired. Her paſſion for fame appeared ſtill ſtronger. One remarkable ſingularity was, that, in a country where red and white paint are in ſuch general uſe among the women, that a female would not beg in the corners of the ſtreets without rouge; that in the Ruſſian language the word *red* is the ſtrongeſt expreſſion to ſignify beauty; and that in the preſents which a village owes to their lady, etiquette exacts a pot of white;

white; in this country, at fifteen years of age, the young Woronſof declared ſhe never would wear any, while ſhe lived. One day, the Prince of Aſchekof, one of the handſomeſt noblemen of the court, making gallant propoſals to her, a little too ſtrong according to the language of the country, ſhe called the Great Chancellor, and ſaid to him, "Uncle, the Prince of Aſchekof does me "the honour of demanding me in marriage." In ſtrictneſs of ſpeech this was true; and this young man, not daring to avow to the firſt perſon in the empire, that this was not preciſely the propoſal he had made to his niece, married her; but ſent her to Moſcow, two hundred leagues diſtant. She paſſed three years there, in a ſociety which ſhe collected together, of the moſt intelligent Muſcovites. In the mean time, her ſiſter, the miſtreſs of the Great Duke, lived like a ſoldier's wife, without being of ſervice to her relations,

who

who had flattered themſelves that they ſhould govern the Great Duke through her, and who ſaw her eſcape all their deſigns through her caprice and heedleſſneſs. They recollected the talents of the princeſs, which theſe courtiers called dexterity and addreſs. They employed all their art to procure her return to the court, being perſuaded that, by her intrigues, ſhe would ſoon have an influence over the minds of all. The court was then held at a palace in the country. This young woman beheld her ſiſter's ſmoking room with diſguſt, and ſhut herſelf up for whole days together, in the ſolitude of the Great Dutcheſs. Both, in their long converſations, ſpoke of deſpotiſm with horror. She believed that ſhe had diſcovered in a ſovereign of her country, ſentiments which ſhe paſſionately deſired. But as ſhe acted contrary to what was demanded of her, ſhe was forced to quit the court, her head being equally heated

loſt all authority in the interior of the palace, and her domeſtics ſerved her only from attachment to her.

If it is conceived that her deſigns ought to be judged by her perils, and that what ſhe dared may be juſtified by what ſhe had to fear, it will be aſked, what were the preciſe intentions of her huſband towards her? How can they be known with certainty? Such a man had no fixed reſolution; but he took dangerous ſteps. It is however certain, that he propoſed to reſtore the unfortunate Ivan to liberty, and to acknowledge him as the heir of his throne; that with this deſign, he had ordered him to be brought to a fortreſs near Peterſbourg, and had been to viſit him in that priſon. He recalled from foreign parts, Count Soltekof, that firſt lover, who had been given to the Empreſs from the pretended neceſſity of inſuring the ſucceſſion, and he preſſed him publicly to

declare himſelf the father of the Great Duke, appearing reſolved to diſavow that child. His miſtreſs began to diſplay an inordinate ambition. Already did they ſpeak in the palace, of divorcing thoſe young ladies of the court, who had juſt complaints to make againſt their huſbands; and the Emperor had juſt ſecretly ordered a dozen beds, perfectly alike, for a dozen approaching marriages; while no perſon was enabled to imagine who were the parties. But now every converſation conſiſted of the complaints, murmurs, and half-ſentences of perſons, who were mutually deſirous of ſounding each other's ſentiments. If the Empreſs was met, in her ſolitary walks, her air might be obſerved to be ſerious, but not melancholy. Clearſighted men might have diſcovered in her countenance, that phlegmatic compoſure under which great deſigns are concealed. Seditious reports, circulated with

heated with indignation againſt her relations, and with enthuſiaſm for the Great Dutcheſs. She remained at Peterſbourg, living without parade, ſeeing foreigners rather than Ruſſians, and employing her genius in the ſtudy of the moſt profound ſciences; and obſerving, at the firſt view, how little her countrymen were advanced, ſhe declared in her familiar converſations, that the fear of the ſcaffold ſhould never be an obſtacle to her; and when ſhe ſaw her ſiſter on the point of being Empreſs, ſhe deteſted an elevation to which her family could not aſpire, but by the deſtruction of her friend; and if ſhe complained without violence, it was becauſe from that moment ſhe had formed fixed reſolutions.

Such were the two unknown connections which the Empreſs had preſerved in the general deſertion; and as they were even unknown to each other, ſhe conducted two

conſpiracies

conſpiracies at once, and kept them perfectly ſeparate, meditating by one an inſurrection of the guards, and by the other a convocation of the great.

Orlof, to frame his plots, had only to continue his uſual mode of life. His firſt accomplices were his brothers, and his intimate friend Bibikof. Theſe five men, ſecure of fortune or of death, ſold all the poſſeſſions of the family, and frequented all the taverns. The dexterity with which the Empreſs had put the artillery cheſt into the hands of Orlof, procured them ſtill more conſiderable funds, with which they indulged all the paſſions of the ſoldiers. In the general diſpoſition of the minds of men, it was eaſy to give them a common movement. They ſowed the ſeeds of diſcontent and ſedition in all the regiments; they inſpired them with compaſſion for the Empreſs, and a deſire of living under her authority. To ſecure the firſt blow, they

gained over two whole companies of the *Iſmailof* guards, and bound the ſoldiers by an oath on the crucifix. They wiſhed at all events to ſecure their colonel, well knowing from his character, that he would neither think of betraying the conſpiracy, nor of making himſelf the chief. It was Count Rozamouſki, a Coſſack, who had been raiſed by the marriage of his brother with the late Empreſs, from the loweſt employs, by which he gained his living, to ſo high a degree of favour, that they even created for him the formidable poſt of *Hetman*, or Sovereign Captain of the Coſſacks. This man, of a coloſſal beauty, diſdaining all intrigue, and even all buſineſs, was agreeable to the court from his appearance, was regarded by the Emperor as a favourite, and cheriſhed by the people, becauſe in the midſt of honours and pomp, the ſimplicity of his conduct made them believe that he did not forget his origin;

origin; though he was of no ſervice in the formation of a plot, his preſence in an inſurrection might determine the multitude. Orlof, whom he had never ſeen, dared to demand a ſecret conference with him, placed before his eyes all the diſorders of the government, and eaſily obtained a promiſe from him, that he would go to the Empreſs whenever ſhe ſhould ſend for him. Rozamouſki made this engagement, and no other was required of him. Orlof gave an account of this conference to his miſtreſs, in their interviews, which were ſtill concealed; they eſcaped the obloquy of the ſoldiery, as well as of the court, and though the princeſs was then under alarms proceeding from a pregnancy which ſhe never declared, the ſame myſtery concealed their love and their plots.

On the other hand, the Empreſs kept up a continual intercourſe by letter, with the Princeſs of Aſchekof, which, having been long

long only the amuſement of two young minds, became by degrees a correſpondence of conſpiracy. That young woman began by procuring for her huſband a diſtant commiſſion, that ſhe might not be forced to put any confidence in him, or perhaps to reſcue him from the dangers to which ſhe was about to be expoſed. She feigned a ſlight indiſpoſition, that ſhe might have an excuſe for going, under pretence of taking the waters, to reſide in a garden at a diſtance from the city; and then, by dividing her numerous rendezvous, ſhe eſcaped any ſuſpicion from the concourſe of perſons at her houſe.

At the firſt hint, the chiefs of the diſcontented clergy, and eſpecially the Archbiſhop of *Novogorod*, promiſed every thing that was wiſhed of them. She found among the great, the remains of all the ancient intrigues of the Empreſs, and had, in many interviews, only the renewal of plots to make. The only man

whoſe ſituation made him equally neceſſary in both conſpiracies, was Count Rozamouſki; but the Empreſs having ſecretly ſecured him, took care to tell the princeſs, "That it was "uſeleſs to attempt him, becauſe for ſeveral "years he had promiſed to devote himſelf "to her, when ſhe wiſhed; that ſhe knew "him well enough to rely on his promiſe, "and that it would be ſufficient to give him "notice at the period when they ſhould "want him," Theſe words, which appeared to announce the moſt prudent reſerve and the moſt generous confidence, and which were ſo likely to be believed by a young woman, diverted her, without difficulty, from the only channel in which ſhe could have learned the double intrigue; but an intereſt, irreconcilable with the deſigns of the Empreſs and of the princeſs, threw an obſtacle in their way which appeared to be invincible.

Catherine,

Catherine, turning to her advantage the injury which the Emperor had done to her ſon, by refuſing to nominate him as his ſucceſſor in the throne, wiſhed to ſecure it to herſelf. Count Panine, the governor of the young Great Duke, the intereſt of whoſe fortune being attached to that of his pupil, made him eaſily enter into the conſpiracy, was deſirous that the crown, after Peter ſhould be deprived of it, ſhould paſs in the order of ſucceſſion, to the natural heir, and that the Empreſs ſhould only have the regency. He ſtrongly oppoſed every other reſolution for a long time. The Princeſs of Aſchekof, of whom he was violently enamoured, in vain employed all the arts of ſeduction; ſhe flattered his paſſion, but did not yield to him, being perſuaded, among other reaſons, from the intimate commerce which her mother had had with Panine, that ſhe was the daughter of her lover. A

Piedmonteſe, named Odart, their confidant, determined this young woman to waive her ſcruples; and it was thus that ſhe obtained from Panine the ſacrifice of his pupil. It will ſuffice for the purpoſe of making this Piedmonteſe known, to report his own words to a man in whom he placed confidence: "I was born poor, I have ſeen that nothing "is reſpected in the world but money; I "will have it; I would ſet fire this evening "to the palace to procure it; when I have "it, I will retire into my own country, and "live an honeſt man as well as others."

Panine and the princeſs had both the ſame ſentiments with reſpect to the government of their country; and if the princeſs owed to her genius a violent horror of ſlavery, Count Panine, who had been fourteen years miniſter from his court in Sweden, had there imbibed ſome republican notions. Both united, therefore, in a reſolution to reſcue their country from

from deſpotiſm, and the Empreſs appeared to encourage them in it. They digeſted the conditions on which the grandees of the nation, in dethroning Peter, gave, by a formal election, the crown to his wife with a limited authority. This hope engaged a great number of the nobles in the conſpiracy. The execution of the project every day acquired more probability; and Catherine, who had only employed it as a means of ſeduction, perceived that ſhe was going to engage herſelf farther than ſhe wiſhed.

At the ſame time the two intrigues began to be connected. The princeſs having ſecured the great, deſcended to the ſoldiers. Orlof having gained the ſoldiery, made attempts on the nobles. Both, unknown to each other, met in the ſoldiers apartments, and viewed each other with a ſuſpicious curioſity. The Empreſs, informed by both of this rencontre, judged it neceſſary to unite

the two intrigues; and ſhe had the dexterity, while ſhe ſtrengthened the one by the other, to make herſelf the miſtreſs of all the movements.

Orlof, inſtructed by her, cauſed himſelf to be ſought after by the princeſs, and that young woman, believing that the ſentiments by which ſhe was animated were in the hearts of all, ſaw only a zealous citizen in the chief of a faction. She never ſuſpected that he had direct acceſs to the Empreſs, and from that moment Orlof became, in effect, the ſole and real head of the enterprize, and had the ſingular addreſs to make himſelf appear the agent only of the Princeſs of Aſchekof.

But as ſoon as he was admitted to the counſels of the nobles, he oppoſed all their projects. He ſwore he would not ſuffer them to impoſe conditions on their ſovereign. He told them, "That the Empreſs "having given her word that ſhe would "herſelf

" herſelf aſſert the rights of their liberty,
" they were bound to give her credit; that
" they might act as they pleaſed, but he was
" maſter of the ſoldiers; that he and the
" guards would act by themſelves if it
" were neceſſary, and were ſufficient to make
" her a ſovereign."

The nobles, already accomplices, thus ſaw themſelves compelled to yield to him who had the power in his hands, and contented themſelves with the vague promiſes, to ſecure their liberty, which the Empreſs made them.

Attention was alſo paid to the people; and for the purpoſe of inſpiring them with the ſpirit of revolt, they circulated a report that it had broke out in all the provinces; that the ſlaves of the prieſts had flocked together from all parts, refuſing to obey the new edict; and that the Tartars of the Crimea were encamped on the frontiers, and were

preparing to force the lines, as ſoon as the Emperor ſhould have led all the troops out of the empire, to a war abſolutely foreign to the Ruſſian intereſts. Theſe reports, partly true and partly falſe, were ſpread with rapidity, as it happens in every country where the government becomes odious, and where a general diſcontent greedily imbibes every thing which can flatter and irritate it; but in Ruſſia, where they never talk of public affairs, and where ſuch curioſity might be puniſhed with death, ſimilar reports were already the commencement of a revolt. This fooliſh haſte of the Emperor for his departure, cauſing him to neglect going to Moſcow, according to the ancient uſage, to receive the crown in the chapel of the ancient Czars, it was openly publiſhed, that it was lawful to dethrone a ſovereign who diſdained the ceremony of coronation.

At

At the ſame time the Empreſs informed the miniſters of the courts whoſe alliance that prince had abandoned, that ſhe deteſted ſuch perfidy, and took meaſures to procure from thoſe courts ſome money, which began to be neceſſary to her. Thoſe miniſters, and particularly the Baron de Breteuil, the French miniſter, accuſtomed for ſome years to manage the diſpoſitions of that nation, employed themſelves in the preſent criſis of the general affairs, to counteract the projects into which the Emperor ſuffered himſelf to be drawn by the enemies of their ſovereigns. They eagerly embraced the opportunity afforded them by the conſpiracy; and though they were reſtrained by the orders of their courts, who had preſcribed to them to take little part in thoſe commotions, they laboured, with equal activity and ſucceſs, to procure all their partizans for the Empreſs. On the contrary, the miniſters who were friends to

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the Emperor, ſolely occupied in the acceleration of his departure, gave themſelves up, for his pleaſure, to the ſenſeleſs fatigues of the court; and while ſo many intrigues eſcaped their notice, they applauded themſelves at the ſucceſs of their negociations, when they ſaw the troops filing off on all ſides, the fleet ready to ſet ſail, the Emperor ſurrounded by all the forces of the empire, and the day fixed for his departure.

They had then a numerous party and ſure reſources; and at the very time when the danger became preſſing, there was not even the appearance that any fixed plan had been concerted. Thoſe who know well the Ruſſian nation, and even ancient conſpirators, pretend that this is the mode in which ſuch ſorts of enterpriſes ſhould always be conducted; that theſe people are well calculated for conſpiracies, by the form of their government, by their natural diſpoſition to ſecrecy,

and

and even by their patient endurance of pain: yet, in conſequence of the implacable enmities ſubſiſting between every family, and the exceſſive jealouſy reigning in every mind, it would be too imprudent to aſſemble a band of conſpirators, who are to divide among them, as accomplices, the different parts of the ſame deſign; that beſides, the habit of ſeeing men raiſed from the moſt abject condition to the higheſt dignities, giving every one reaſon to pretend to them for himſelf, it would be equally dangerous to preſent to them chiefs, whoſe approaching greatneſs they might regard with ſuſpicion; that therefore it is neceſſary to ſecure them individually, to afford each a hope of the higheſt favour, and to unite them only at the moment of execution.

If an aſſaſſination was wiſhed, they were ſure of ſucceeding; and Paſſig, the captain of the guards, threw himſelf at the Empreſs's feet,

feet, demanding only her order to ſlay the Emperor, in open day, and at the head of his guard. This man and another, named Baſchekakof, of the ſame diſpoſition, had already failed twice in the attempt, near a ſmall uninhabited houſe, the firſt which Peter the Great built in the iſlands on which he founded Peterſburg, and which, on that account, the Ruſſians preſerved with reſpect, in a ſolitary walk where Peter the Third came ſometimes in the evening with his miſtreſs, and where theſe two madmen waited for him at their own inſtigation. A choſen band of conſpirators, conducted by Count Panine, had been to reconnoitre the prince's apartment, his bedchamber, his bed, and the doors which led to it. The plan which had been finally determined, was to go in great force on one of the approaching evenings, and carry him off if it were poſſible, to kill him if he ſhould reſiſt, and to convoke the

nobles

nobles in order to give an appearance of juſtice to his depoſition; and the Empreſs, who would not have openly taken any part in this revolution, avoiding every appearance of being concerned in the plot, would have had the air of yielding only to the intreaties of her people, and would have received the rights, which no title gave her, by a voluntary and unanimous proclamation. Such was the baſis of her conduct. It was to produce this effect, that, almoſt inviſible in the conſpiracy, ſhe directed all its ſecret ſprings, and even after the open conduct to which ſhe was forced, ſhe always endeavoured to bring back men's minds to this notion.

The Emperor was at a country ſeat, at about a dozen leagues diſtance. The Empreſs, through fear of exciting ſuſpicion if ſhe remained in the city during his abſence, went to another. The Emperor had fixed his return for his departure to the war, and the

the Empreſs, for the execution of her plots; but the furious zeal of that captain Paſſig fruſtrated all her deſigns. That violent conſpirator, always indiſcreet in his converſation, ſpoke of the plot in the preſence of a ſoldier whom he had ill-uſed, and who immediately gave information to the chancellor of the regiment. Paſſig was apprehended, and a courier immediately diſpatched with the intelligence to the Emperor.

All would have been loſt but for a precaution, taken by Odart the Piedmonteſe, the ſecret of which was only known to himſelf and the Princeſs of Aſchekof. Every man of conſequence had a ſpy in his train, who never loſt ſight of him. The princeſs was informed of the arreſt of Paſſig at a quarter paſt nine o'clock. She ſent immediately for Count Panine to come to her houſe, and propoſed to him the inſtant execution of their deſigns; a propoſition ſimilar

to

to one made by ſome true Romans in ſimilar circumſtances. " That it was neceſſary to " endeavour, without delay, to excite the " people and the ſoldiers to inſurrection; " that the accomplices ſhould aſſemble; that " the eclat of a ſudden declaration would " ſeize on the minds of the people, and " hurry the multitude to action; that the " Emperor had nothing prepared againſt " ſuch an attempt; that the braveſt men " are aſtoniſhed by ſudden movements: and " what could that fop and his debauched " train oppoſe to them? That things which " appear impoſſible in deliberation, ſuc- " ceed becauſe men dare to undertake " them. And how was it poſſible to hope, " from that moment, that the ſecret would " be preſerved among ſo many terrified ac- " complices? Would oaths be obſerved " with fidelity in the midſt of puniſhments " and rewards? What was to be expected?

" Death,

" Death, an ignominious death, was inevi-
" table! Was it not better to periſh in the
" embraces of their country, imploring aid
" for liberty; to periſh, worthy at once of
" their anceſtors and of immortality, through
" the fault of the ſoldiers and people, if they
" deſerted them?"

The Roman conſpirator did not follow this advice, and died by the hand of the executioner. The Ruſſian thought in the ſame manner: " That a precipitate decla-
" ration would complete their ruin; that
" even if they ſhould ſucceed in exciting
" Peterſbourg to revolt, it would only be
" the commencement of a civil war, the
" Emperor having near him a fortified town,
" a fleet in readineſs, 3000 men of his
" choſen Holſtein troops, and all the forces
" which had been aſſembled to join the
" army; that the night was in no degree
" favourable, as in thoſe climates the nights

" were not then dark; that the Empreſs " being abſent, could not arrive before " morning; that they ſhould attend to con- " ſequences; and that there would be time, " on the morrow, to regulate their conduct " by the event." Thus thought Count Panine, who always temporized, and retired to reſt.

The Princeſs of Aſchekof heard what he had to ſay, and departed. It was midnight. This woman, only eighteen years of age, dreſſed herſelf in men's clothes, ſet out alone from her houſe, and proceeded to a bridge, which ſhe knew to be the ordinary rendez-vous of the conſpirators. Orlof was found there, in the midſt of his brethren. One is pleaſed to obſerve how fortune ſeconds vigilance. At the news of the arreſt of Paſſig, at the propoſition of immediate action, they all remained motionleſs; joy ſucceeded their firſt aſtoniſhment, and they conſented with

tranſport. One of the brothers, who had been called the *ſcarred*, from a gaſh on his face, the conſequence of a blow in a public game, who would have been ſingularly handſome, if his countenance had been leſs ferocious, and who united agility with ſtrength, was diſpatched by the Princeſs, with a billet which contained theſe words: "Come, "Madam, the time is urgent." The Princeſs, with the others, paſſed the night in preparing the inſurrection; which was done with ſo much ſkill, that every thing would be ready on the arrival of the Empreſs; or, if any obſtacle ſhould detain that Princeſs, no imprudent eclat would have betrayed their plots. They foreſaw that the enterpriſe might fail; and in that caſe they had ſecured the Empreſs's eſcape into Sweden. Orlof, and his friend, each loaded a piſtol, and made a mutual exchange of them, ſwearing never to uſe the weapons, in the moſt immi-

nent dangers, but to reſerve them, if the enterpriſe ſhould not ſucceed, as inſtruments of their reciprocal death. The Princeſs made no preparation for herſelf; puniſhment was a matter of indifference to her.

The Empreſs was at the caſtle of Peterſhoff, eight leagues diſtant; and under the pretext of leaving the Emperor, who was expected there that very day, the free diſpoſal of all the apartments, and ſeeming to fear that ſhe ſhould embarraſs that Prince and his court, ſhe took up her lodging in a detached pavilion. This pavilion being built on a canal, communicated with the river; and a veſſel, moored under the very windows of the Empreſs, would ſerve for her eſcape on the firſt alarm.

Orlof the *ſcarred* had learned from his brother the moſt ſecret paſſages of the garden and of the pavilion; that ſoldier waked his Sovereign, and conceiving at the

moment the deſign of uſurping for his family the whole honour of the revolution, he had the audacious addreſs to keep back the Princeſs's billet, and ſaid to the Empreſs, in her firſt ſurpriſe at waking: " Madam, " come; there is not a moment to loſe;" and without waiting for a reply he quitted her, went down, and diſappeared.

The Empreſs, in an inexpreſſible aſtoniſhment, dreſſed herſelf and remained in diſmay, when the ſame man, traverſing on horſeback the alleys of the park, with the rapidity of lightning, returned and ſaid, " Here is your carriage." The Empreſs ſuffered herſelf to be led on, without having time to form any reſolution, holding the arm of Catherine Ivanouwena, and ran to the park gate. She there found a carriage, which the *Scarred* had procured at a neighbouring farm, where, for ten days paſt, it had, through the care of the Princeſs of Aſchekof,

been

been conſtantly in readineſs, either becauſe the impatience of the guards made them apprehend they ſhould ſoon be obliged to declare themſelves, or that an additional medium might be prepared for the reſcue of the Empreſs from every danger, relays being ſecured as far as the bordering frontiers.

The carriage ſet out, conducted by peaſants, and drawn by eight hack horſes; but all the horſes of that country being of the Tartar breed, ſtill retain their original ſpeed.

Catherine's mind was ſo much at eaſe, that ſhe paſſed part of the journey in laughing, with her attendant, at the diſorder apparent in their dreſs.

They perceived, at a diſtance, an open carriage, driven with extreme rapidity; and as the road led towards the Emperor, they regarded it with anxiety. It was Orlof, the

favourite, haſtening to meet his miſtreſs, who, exclaiming, "Every thing is ready," led the way with the ſame ſpeed. They flew towards the city, Orlof being alone in the firſt carriage, and the Empreſs and her woman in the ſecond, and in the rear, the *Scarred* and a ſoldier who accompanied him.

As they approached the city, they met a man of the name of Michel, a French valet-de-chambre, whom the Empreſs treated with ſingular kindneſs, condeſcending to be his confidant, and educating his illegitimate children. He was haſtening to be preſent at her toilet, and perceived, with alarm, the Empreſs amidſt this ſingular eſcort. He thought ſhe was carried off by the Emperor's orders. She put out her head, and exclaimed, "Fol-"low me;" and Michel, with a palpitating heart, imagined he was following her to Siberia.

Thus

Thus Catherine arrived, to reign deſpotically over the greateſt empire in the world, between ſeven and eight in the morning, having ſet out on the faith of a ſoldier, being guided by peaſants, conducted by her lover, and accompanied by her woman and her hair-dreſſer.

It was neceſſary to paſs through the city, in order to reach the ſoldiers' quarters, which are ſituate on the eaſt of the town, and which, on that ſide, form a real camp. They proceeded directly to the two companies of the regiment of Iſmailof, which had already taken the oath. The ſoldiers had not yet quitted their lodgements, becauſe they feared they ſhould ruin all by ſtirring too ſoon. The Empreſs alighted in the road which ſurrounds the Caſernes; and while her conductors haſtened to announce her arrival, ſhe, ſupported by her woman, paſſed over a great ſpace which ſeparates the road from the Caſernes.

She was received by about thirty ſoldiers, who came out in diſorder, with no other dreſs than their ſhoes and their ſhirts. This ſpectacle aſtoniſhed her: ſhe turned pale: a viſible tremor agitated her perſon. But under this emotion, which only rendered her more intereſting, ſhe ſaid to them, " That " ſhe came to throw herſelf into their arms, " that the Emperor had iſſued orders to put " her and her ſon to death: and that the aſ- " ſaſſins, entruſted with the execution of the " order, had ſet out." They all ſwore with one voice, that they would die in her defence. The officers haſtened to the ſpot: the crowd increaſed. She ſent for the prieſt of the regiment, ordering him to bring a crucifix; the prieſt came, pale and trembling, holding his crucifix in his hand; he adminiſtered the oath to the ſoldiers, ſcarcely knowing what he was about. At this moment Count Rozamouſki was more faithful to her perſon, than

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to the Emperor's friendſhip. He was followed by General Volſkonſki, nephew of the Chancellor, who had been diſgraced, among other reaſons, for his ſingular attachment to the Princeſs; by the Count of Schouvalof, who, in the laſt reign, had enjoyed the ſupreme favour with moderation, and whom Elizabeth's memory ſtill endeared to the ſoldiery; by the Count of Bruce, the firſt major of the guards; and by Count Strogonoff, whoſe wife, as well as the Counteſs of Bruce, were then with the Emperor, both celebrated for their beauty, and named among thoſe, who were going, as it was ſaid, to be divorced. Some among this firſt crowd proclaimed the Empreſs regent. Orlof ran towards them, and ſaid: " That " the work muſt not be done by halves, nor " ought they to riſk puniſhment, to have, " one day or other, to recommence the " affair; and that he would ſtab, with his

" own

" own hand, the firſt who ſhould pronounce " the word *regency*." Major Chapelof, on whom they had relied, did not make his appearance; and the firſt order given by the Empreſs, was, " That they ſhould go and inform " him ſhe had no occaſion for him, and " ſhould put him under arreſt." The ſubaltern officers haſtened on all ſides to their companies, and ordered them to take arms. It is remarkable, that out of the great number of individual officers, who had given their words, Pouſkine alone had the misfortune, or the weakneſs, to break his. The Empreſs made the tour of this ſort of camp formed by the Caſernes, and reviewed, on foot, the three regiments of guards, ſo formidable to their ſovereigns; which, formerly formed by Peter the Firſt, of foreigners, became his ſecurity againſt the Ruſſian factions, but which, being ſince augmented in number, had already three times diſpoſed

of

of the regency or the crown. As ſhe advanced from the quarters of Iſmailof to thoſe of Simonoſki, at the head of the firſt regiment, the ſoldiers, whom ſhe gained only by repreſenting her danger to them, exclaimed, "That ſhe was not ſafe, while "marching at their head;" and formed themſelves round her in a ſquare battalion. Two officers only, of the regiment of the Aſcenſion *Preobaſinkſi*, throughout the quarters oppoſed their ſoldiers, and were put under arreſt. As ſhe paſſed by the priſon of the regiment, in which Paſſig was confined, ſhe ſent to liberate him. And this man, who was preparing himſelf to undergo every ſpecies of torture, without revealing any thing, aſtoniſhed at ſuch unexpected intelligence, had the preſence of mind to diſtruſt it, fearful that it was a ſnare laid to entrap him, in his firſt emotions, into a confeſſion of the conſpiracy; and he refuſed to

be

be ſet free. The three regiments being aſſembled, the ſoldiers crying *huzza*, imagined that the enterprize was complete, and all aſked to kiſs the Empreſs's hand. She appeaſed this fooliſh enthuſiaſm, by repreſenting to them kindly, that they had other things to attend to at that moment. Orlof ran towards the regiment of artillery, a numerous and formidable company, almoſt all the ſoldiers of which wore a mark of honour, for having been preſent at the bloody battles with the King of Pruſſia. He preſumed enough on the credit which his office of treaſurer to the corps would give him among the ſoldiers, to hope that they would be induced to take up arms; but they refuſed to obey him, and demanded what their general ſaid.

Their general was Villebois, a French refugee, grand-maſter of the artillery, a man of genius, of ſingular courage, and extra-

ordinary

ordinary probity. Having been for ſome time beloved by Catherine, he imagined that he was ſo ſtill. It was through him that ſhe had procured for Orlof, even at the time of her diſgrace, the office of treaſurer, ſo uſeful to her deſigns. But Orlof, deſirous, without doubt, of breaking off the connexion between this man and the Empreſs, had excluded him from the conſpiracy. He was at this moment employed with the engineers. One of the conſpirators came and told him, "That the Empreſs, his ſovereign, commanded his preſence at the Caſernes of the guards." Villebois, aſtoniſhed at this order, aſked if the Emperor was dead. The emiſſary made no reply, but repeated the ſame words; and Villebois, turning to the engineers, ſaid, "Every man is mortal;" and followed the aid-de-camp.

Villebois, who, till this moment, had flattered himſelf that he was beloved by the Empreſs,

Empreſs, when he arrived at the Caſernes, and obſerved her ſurrounded by the crowd, perceived, with a mortal chagrin, that ſo great a project had been concerted, without his having been admitted into the ſecret. He adored his ſovereign; and ſeeking to diſguiſe various reproaches, under the feigned or real excuſe of the difficulties which obſtructed his ſeconding the enterprize, from his misfortune in not having been made a confidant: "You ſhould have foreſeen, "Madam," ſaid he,—ſhe haſtily interrupted him, and replied with the ſevereſt haughtineſs; "I did not ſend for you to learn what "I ſhould have foreſeen, but to aſk you what "you mean to do." He fell at her feet, and ſaid, "To obey you, Madam;" and immediately departed to order the regiment of artillery to take arms, and to ſurrender all the arſenals to the Empreſs.

Prince

Prince George of Holſtein, Peter's uncle, was the only one of all thoſe, whoſe attachment to the Emperor was known, that remained in the city. An aid-de-camp came to him with the intelligence that there was a commotion in the Caſernes; he was dreſſing himſelf in haſte, when he and his family were arreſted.

The Empreſs, already ſurrounded by ten thouſand men, mounted the ſame carriage, and knowing the genius of her people, ſhe led them to the principal church of the city, where ſhe alighted to pray. Thence ſhe proceeded to a large palace, which, on one ſide, bordered on the river, and on the other, commanded an immenſe ſpace. This palace was ſurrounded with the ſoldiers, as much as poſſible. Cannon, with lighted matches, were placed at the entrance of each ſtreet. The croſs-ways and other places were interſected by a body of

of guards; and in order to deprive the Emperor of any information of what was taking place, a detachment blocked up the bridge, which, at the end of Peterſbourg, led to the country-ſeat where that Prince was; but it was too late. In ſo great a city, a ſingle man only, a foreigner, thought of carrying the intelligence to the Emperor: his name was Breſſan; he was born in the principality of Monaco, of a family originally of that country, but naturalized in France; he had availed himſelf of the appellation of Frenchman in Ruſſia, in order to procure greater protection and a better reception. He was an honeſt and intelligent man, whom the Emperor had employed as a peruke-maker, with the intention of raiſing him to the higheſt ſituations; and who, at leaſt on this occaſion, juſtified, by his fidelity, the exceſs of his favour. He diſpatched an adroit valet, habited like a peaſant, and mounted

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on one of the ſmall carriages uſed by the country people, and thinking that, at ſuch a moment, he ſhould diſtruſt all thoſe who ſurrounded the Emperor, he commanded his emiſſary to give the billet into the Prince's own hands. This feigned peaſant had juſt paſſed, before the bridge was occupied by the detachment.

An officer, with a numerous eſcort, haſtened, by the Empreſs's order, to ſeek the young Great Duke, who was aſleep in another palace. This child, already informed of the perils which threatened his life, awoke ſurrounded by ſoldiers, and diſplayed a terror, the impreſſion of which remained a long time on his mind. Panine, his governor, who, till that moment, had remained with his pupil, encouraged him, took him in his arms in his night-clothes, and thus carried him to his mother. She preſented him from a balcony to the ſoldiers and the

people. An innumerable multitude was aſſembled. All the other regiments in the city had joined the guards. The acclamations were long repeated, and all the caps of the crowd were at once thrown into the air. The multitude, being kept back, but without tumult, opened, crowded together, and made way for a train of perſons, which advanced ſlowly into the midſt of them. It was a grand funeral, which had paſſed through the principal ſtreets, without any body ever being able to diſcover whoſe funeral it was. Soldiers, with a mourning cloak above their uniforms, carried lighted torches; and while the general attention was occupied on the ſpot, the proceſſion diſappeared. It has been mentioned ſeveral times ſince to the Princeſs of Aſchekof, whoſe ſole reply has always been, "We "took our precautions well."

It

It is probable that this engine was ſet to work for the purpoſe of circulating a vague notion of the Emperor's death among the people and the ſlaves; of baniſhing all ideas of reſiſtance, if it were only for the firſt moments; and of procuring a general and unanimous proclamation, by thus adding fraud to ſeduction. And certainly, ſcarcely twenty perſons out of the multitude which over-run the ſtreets, nor even of thoſe in the palace, knew preciſely what they were doing. The people and the ſoldiers, ignorant whether the Emperor was living or not, and repeating, in their acclamations, the word *huzza*, which is nothing but an expreſſion of joy, with no other ſenſe, believed that they were proclaiming the young Great Duke Emperor, and were merely giving the regency to his mother. Many of the conſpirators, haſtening to ſend the earlieſt intelligence to their friends, wrote this falſe

information. This tumult had aſſumed the appearance of joy: no ideas of injuſtice diſturbed the public ſatisfaction, and friends embraced each other amidſt mutual congratulations.

But a manifeſto, which was diſtributed through the city, ſoon gave an inſight into the real deſign. It was a printed manifeſto, which Odart, the Piedmonteſe, had kept for ſeveral days in his apartments with great alarm; and this man, the next day, appearing to breathe more at his eaſe, ſaid, "At "laſt, I am no longer afraid of being broken "on the wheel." This publication declared, "That the Empreſs Catherine II. "yielding to the intreaties of her people, "had aſcended the throne of her beloved "country, to ſave it from ruin;" and inveighing againſt the Emperor, ſhe ſpoke with indignation againſt the King of Pruſſia, and the pillage of the prieſts. Theſe were

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the avowed ſentiments of a German princeſs, who has ſince cemented that alliance, and completed that pillage.

All the nobles, upon learning the news, on their riſing in the morning, haſtened to the palace; and their phyſiognomies, full of joy and anxiety, in which eagerneſs and ſmiles were united with paleneſs and fear, was not one of the leaſt intereſting ſpectacles in the ſcene: they found the prieſts, on their entrance into the palace, celebrating a ſolemn maſs, and adminiſtering an oath of fidelity, and the Empreſs employing every art of ſeduction. A tumultuous council was held in her preſence upon what ought to follow. Each, excited by the danger, and deſirous of gaining her favour, propoſed ſchemes, and were eager for putting them in execution; and ſoon finding that precautions againſt the city, which was already entirely in a ſtate of revolt, had ceaſed to be neceſſary, and that

Peterſbourg might now be left behind them without any apprehenſion, it was reſolved to lead the whole army inſtantly againſt the Emperor. A great clamour among the ſoldiers interrupted their deliberations. Continually alarmed at the danger of the Empreſs, and perpetually perſuaded that the aſſaſſins, pretended to be ſent to kill her and her ſon, were on the point of arriving every moment, they thought ſhe was too much expoſed in that immenſe palace, whoſe walls were waſhed by the river, and which, from being in an unfiniſhed ſtate, appeared open on all ſides; they could not, they ſaid, anſwer for her ſafety. They demanded, with loud outcries, that ſhe ſhould remove to an ancient wooden palace, which was much ſmaller, and commanded the ſame ſpot; and which they could ſurround on all quarters. The Empreſs paſſed, through the intermediate ſpace, amidſt the moſt tumultuous acclama-

acclamations. Beer and brandy were diſtributed among the ſoldiers. They had all put on their ancient regimentals, throwing off, with deriſion, a new uniform in the Pruſſian faſhion, which the Emperor had juſt given them, and which left the ſoldier almoſt naked in thoſe frozen climates. They received with hootings thoſe who, running out in haſte, had clothed themſelves in the new dreſs; and the new caps, toſſed from hand to hand like balls, were made the ſport of the multitude.

One regiment alone had a ſerious and melancholy aſpect; it was a very fine regiment of cavalry, of which the Emperor had been colonel from his infancy, which he had ordered to the city, as ſoon as he came to the throne; and to which he had given rank among the regiments of the guards. The officers of this corps refuſed to march, and were all put under arreſt; other officers, in a different

uniform, led on the ſoldiers, whoſe diſinclination was evident.

About noon, the chiefs of the Ruſſian clergy, all of them old men of venerable aſpects, (it is well known, how the ſmalleſt things capable of ſtriking the imagination become, at ſuch deciſive moments, of the greateſt importance,) all of them, with beautiful white hair, with long white beards, clothed with ſplendor and dignity, and carrying the crown, the Imperial globe, and the ancient books, the inſignia of the coronation, marched, with a tranquil and majeſtic ſtep, through the whole army, who, from an impreſſion of reſpect, for a moment preſerved ſilence; they went up to the palace to crown the Empreſs; and this ſpectacle impreſſed on every mind certain emotions, which ſeemed to legitimate violence and uſurpation.

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As ſoon as the ceremony was over, ſhe put on the ancient uniform of the guards, which ſhe borrowed of a young officer nearly of her ſize. To the ſtriking ceremonies of religion, ſucceeded a warlike toilet, when the charms of gallantry increaſed the ſtrong intereſt excited by the ſcene; and this young and handſome woman was ſeen, with the moſt ſeductive gracefulneſs, receiving from the nobles, who ſurrounded her, a hat, a ſword, and above all, the ribband of the firſt order of the empire, which her huſband had quitted for the Pruſſian order. In this new dreſs ſhe mounted a horſe at the palace-gate; and accompanied by the Princeſs of Aſchekof, alſo on horſeback, and in the habit of the guards, ſhe made the tour of the palace, ſhowed herſelf to the troops, as about to become their general; and by her ſmiling and ſtedfaſt countenance, reſtored to the multitude that confidence, which ſhe herſelf received from them.

The

The regiments began to file off, with the intention of quitting the city, to march againſt the Emperor. The Empreſs returned to the palace, and dined near a window which opened towards the place. As ſhe held up her glaſs ſhe appeared to ſalute the troops, which they anſwered by long acclamations. She then remounted her horſe, and ſet out at the head of her army.

A whole city was thus excited to inſurrection, and a whole army to revolt, without the ſmalleſt diſorder; and after their departure there was not the leaſt ſymptom of agitation in Peterſbourg. About ſix o'clock, a regiment of three thouſand Coſſacks, which was paſſing by at ſome diſtance, and which the Empreſs's emiſſaries met before the Emperor's, croſſed the town to accompany her, well armed and well mounted; the officers being remarkable for their politeneſs. This march had the air of a feſtival, which impreſſed

preſſed every imagination with the idea of the good fortune of the Empreſs, and increaſed the public ſecurity.

A ſhort geographical deſcription is neceſſary for the underſtanding of what follows. The river Nerva falls into the ſea at the extremity of the Gulf of Finland, and appears to prolong it. At twelve leagues from its mouth, and upon ſome iſlands, the width of whoſe different arms affords the moſt delightful proſpect, the city of Peterſbourg has been built about ſixty years, on a low and marſhy ground, which, from the want of ſolidity in the firſt edifices, haſtily conſtructed, and the frequency of conflagrations, has already been raiſed more than three feet on the ruins. As you deſcend the river, the right bank is ſtill uncultivated, and covered with extenſive foreſts. The left bank is bounded by a chain of hills, which continue of an equal height to the ſpot where the two banks

banks open to an extent out of the compaſs of ſight, and leave nothing but a vaſt ſea between them. At this ſpot, on the top of the hill, and in a delicious ſituation, ſtands the caſtle of Oranienbaum. The celebrated Menchikof built it; and upon the diſgrace of that favourite, the confiſcation of his wealth gave it to the crown. It was the country ſeat particularly allotted to the Emperor in his infancy. A ſort of fortreſs, whoſe ramparts were ſcarcely ſix feet high, was built there for his inſtruction; a model erected with the intention of giving the young Prince a notion of a great fortification, and in itſelf uſeleſs for the purpoſes of defence. With the ſame views, an arſenal had been erected there, entirely incapable of ſupplying arms for the troops, and only calculated for a cabinet of military rarities, among which were preſerved the moſt valuable trophies of the empire, the ſtandards taken

from

from the Swedes and Pruſſians. The Emperor was ſingularly attached to this caſtle; and he was there with a thouſand choſen men of the troops of his Dutchy of Holſtein.

Oppoſite, and in ſight of the caſtle, at the very mouth of the river, ſtands the city of Cronſtadt, built on an iſland. The houſes built in the time of Peter the Firſt, and conſtantly inhabited ſince, were near falling to ruin. The harbour is ſafe and commodious, and lies on that ſide of the iſland which looks towards Oranienbaum. The whole of that ſide is fortified. The fortifications of the other ſide have not been completed; but this arm of the river, before dangerous in itſelf, has been made impaſſable by a quantity of large ſtones thrown into it. It was in this harbour of the iſland that a great part of the fleet, which was ready to ſail for Holſtein, well ſupplied with proviſions and ammunition,

tion, and well manned, lay at the diſpoſal of the Emperor. The other part of the fleet, equally at his diſpoſal, was ſtationed at Revel, an ancient town, ſituate farther down on the gulf itſelf.

Along the hill which bounds the river, and between Oranienbaum and Peterſbourg, are built, in the midſt of pleaſant woods, and at a ſhort diſtance from each other, the country houſes of the Ruſſian noblemen. In the middle of them ſtands a ſuperb palace which Peter I. built on his return from France, hoping to imitate in his garden the water-works of Verſailles by the aid of the ſea. That was the ſpot where the Empreſs had been ſought; and her reſidence, as we have ſeen, was ſingularly well choſen, between Peterſbourg, where the conſpiracy was in agitation, Oranienbaum, where the court was kept, and the neighbouring coaſt of Finland, which would have afforded her an aſylum.

It was to this caſtle named Peterhoff, *Peter's Court*, that the Emperor was to have gone that ſame day, St. Peter's, to celebrate the feſtival of the Saint whoſe name he bore.

That Prince was in the moſt perfect ſecurity. When he was informed of the indication of a conſpiracy, and received intelligence that a conſpirator had been apprehended, he replied, "He is a madman." He ſet out for Oranienbaum, and proceeded gaily on his journey in an open carriage, accompanied by his miſtreſs, the Pruſſian miniſter, and a ſelection of the handſomeſt women. Every heart ſeemed animated by the pleaſures of the feſtival; but Peterhoff, where he was on the point of arriving, was already thrown into conſternation. They had diſcovered the Empreſs's flight. She had been ſought for in vain through the garden and the woods. A ſentinel ſaid, that he had ſeen, about four in the morning, two women go out of the

park. Thoſe who arrived from Peterſbourg, not having any ſuſpicion of what was tranſacting in the Caſernes at the time of their departure, not only brought no intelligence, but affimed upon oath that nothing new was ſtirring there. One of theſe perſons, and one of the Empreſs's chamberlains were walking on foot in the road by which the Emperor muſt paſs. They met the aid-de-camp Goudowitz, his favourite, who preceded him on horſeback. They thought it beſt to intruſt him with the news. The aid-de-camp returned with all ſpeed, ſtopped the carriage in ſpite of the Emperor, who exclaimed, "What folly is this?" and approached and whiſpered him. The Emperor turned pale, and ſaid, "Let me alight." He ſtopped ſome time on the road, queſtioning his aid-de-camp with great earneſtneſs, and perceiving near him one of the park-gates, he ordered all the ladies to alight, and

left them in the middle of the road, ſurpriſed and alarmed at this action, the cauſe of which they did not comprehend, telling them only to meet him at the caſtle by going through the allies of the park, and haſtily remounted the carriage with ſome men. He ordered them to drive with prodigious ſpeed, ran as ſoon as he arrived into the Empreſs's chamber, looked under the bed, opened the ſaſhes, and ſounded the ceilings and waincoat with his cane; and ſeeing his miſtreſs approach ſurrounded by all the young ladies, he exclaimed, "I told you ſhe was capable of any thing." All the courtiers around him, ſuſpecting in their hearts the fatal truth, kept a profound ſilence, whether, becauſe from a diſtruſt of each other, they ſaw how neceſſary it was to be cautious, or becauſe at ſuch a moment they feared to diſpleaſe a ſovereign by alarming him. The loweſt domeſtics, inſtructed by the peaſants whom they had met in the

woods, or by their own conjectures, already diſcourſed to each other on what was paſſing at Peterſbourg, of which the court appeared as yet to have no ſuſpicion. A foreign lacquey juſt arrived from the city, (he was a young Frenchman, who, full of ideas of his nation, had ſeen the commencement of the commotion without conceiving its object,) much aſtoniſhed at the conſternation which he diſcovered at Peterhoff, haſtily came and ſaid, " That the Empreſs was not " loſt, ſhe was at Peterſbourg, and that the " feſtival of St. Peter would be very magni- " ficent, for all the troops were under arms." While the Emperor diſcovered in the ſimplicity of this narration, that his reign was over, a peaſant entered in the confuſion, and making, after the faſhion of the country, a number of ſigns of the croſs, and bending frequently, approached the Emperor in ſilence, drew a letter from his boſom, and lifting

lifting his eyes to heaven, gave it into his hands. It was the valet in diſguiſe, who, in obedience to the orders of his maſter, not to give the billet to any other perſon than the Prince himſelf, had already ſought in vain to accoſt him in the woods. The byſtanders, in ſilence and uncertainty, ſurrounded the Emperor, who having read the letter with a caſt of his eye, read it over again aloud. It was written in theſe words, "The regiments "of guards have revolted; the Empreſs is "at their head; it is paſt nine o'clock, ſhe "is juſt entering the church of Cazan; all "the people ſeem inclined to follow this "movement, and your majeſty's faithful ſub-"jects do not make their appearance." The Emperor exclaimed, "Well, gentle-"men, you ſee I was right." Immediately the Great Chancellor Woronſof, the princi-pal man in the court, having ſpoken of his influence over the minds of the people and

of the Empreſs, propoſed to go in perſon to Peterſbourg; and in fact, on his arrival, he repreſented ſagaciouſly to the Empreſs all the conſequences of the enterprize. She anſwered, ſhowing him the people and the army, "It is not I, it is the whole nation." The Great Chancellor replied, that he ſaw it well, took the oath, and haſtened to add, "That not being able to ſerve her in a mili-"tary expedition, and fearing after the re-"preſentations he had made to her, that he "might fall under her ſuſpicion, he intreated "ſhe would order him under arreſt, at his "own houſe, with an officer as his guard, "who ſhould not quit him;" thus ſecuring himſelf on both ſides, whatever might be the event.

In the mean time, the Emperor ſent an order to his Holſtein troops, commanding them to haſten to him with their cannon. Huſſars were diſpatched to all the roads leading to

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Peterſbourg to gain intelligence, to all the neighbouring villages to aſſemble the peaſants, and to all the regiments which were filing off in the vicinity, to bring them to his aſſiſtance, if there was ſtill an opportunity. He nominated that Chamberlain of the Empreſs, who had brought him intelligence of her eſcape, Generaliſſimo. He ordered them to go to Peterſbourg for his own regiment, and ſeveral laid hold of this pretext to quit him. He walked up and down with haſty ſteps, like a man whoſe head was deranged. He iſſued orders that the Empreſs ſhould be killed. He frequently aſked for drink. He dictated long manifeſtoes againſt her, full of the moſt ſanguinary invectives. He employed a great number of the courtiers to tranſcribe them, and huſſars were ſent to diſtribute the copies. Laſtly, in this extremity, he reſolved to quit the Pruſſian uniform and ribband, and re-aſſumed the inſignia of the Ruſſian empire.

The whole court, ſcattered and alarmed, was walking in the gardens; but Munick was deſirous of ſaving his benefactor. The reputation of his ancient victories had procured him admiſſion to the court, ſo abſurdly military; and ſeeing nothing there, after twenty years of exile, but the new exerciſes, the univerſal mania of Europe, in which the youngeſt lieutenant is certain of ſurpaſſing the moſt experienced general, he had hitherto kept ſilence. But great talents reaſſume, of themſelves, all their aſcendant, in times of urgent danger; and he promiſed himſelf, undoubtedly, that he ſhould once more become maſter of the empire by ſaving the Emperor. He made a calculation to the Prince of the opportunities and forces of the Empreſs; ſhowed that ſhe would arrive in a few hours, with twenty thouſand men and a formidable artillery; proved that neither Peterhof, where he then was, nor the environs, could be put in a ſtate of defence; and

and added, " That from the knowledge he " had of the Ruſſian ſoldiery, he was con- " vinced that a ſlight reſiſtance would ſerve " no other purpoſe than to cauſe the maſ- " ſacre of the Emperor and the women who " accompanied him; that his ſafety and " ſucceſs were at Cronſtadt, where there " was a numerous garriſon, and a well- " manned fleet; that all the women who " were with him, would become ſo many " hoſtages; that every thing depended on " gaining a ſingle day; that this popular " commotion, this inſurrection of a night, " would diſperſe of themſelves, or if they " continued, the Emperor might meet them " with at leaſt equal forces, and would ſpread " conſternation over Peterſbourg."

This advice reanimated every heart. Even thoſe who had already meditated their eſcape, ſeeing that the event was uncertain, reſolved to follow the Emperor, with the deſign of

remaining attached to his fortune, if he ſhould gain the advantage, or of watching an opportunity, if he ſhould fail, of betraying him to their own advantage. A general who was devoted to him was ſent to Cronſtadt to take the command of that town, and an aid-de-camp came back to announce, "that the garriſon continued in their duty, "and was determined to die for the Em-"peror; that he was expected there, and "that they were labouring, with the greateſt "zeal, for his defence." In the interval his Holſtein troops arrived; and the certainty of an aſylum affording him ſome ſecurity, he wiſhed them to be put in order of battle. His military mania laying hold of him, he ſaid, "He ought not to fly before he had "ſeen the enemy." They had brought two yachts to the ſhore; and endeavouring in vain to determine him to embark, they employed the buffoons and valets to induce him;

him; but he treated them as poltroons. He examined what advantage might be derived from ſome riſing ground near the place. While he was loſing his time in theſe fruitleſs diſpoſitions, intelligence was received from ſome huſſars belonging to the Empreſs, who had been ſeized as they were advancing to reconnoitre, that nothing in Peterſbourg reſiſted the Empreſs, and that ſhe was at the head of twenty thouſand men. At eight o'clock, an aid-de-camp came at full gallop, to announce that the army was marching, in order of battle, againſt Peterhoff. Upon this intelligence, the Emperor, followed by his whole court, ran to the river-ſide; they precipitated themſelves into the two yachts, and all embarked in haſte; and the formidable reſolution, which Munick had adviſed, was followed only through fear. Perhaps I ought not to omit a circumſtance, of no importance in itſelf, except as it ſhows

with

with what profound indifference men can be witneſſes of theſe terrible events. An ocular witneſs of the flight, who quietly remained on the ſhore, having related the occurrence on the next day, was aſked how he could reſolve not to follow his maſter, when he was embarking to diſpute his crown and his life? He anſwered: "In fact, I was on "the point of embarking, but it was late; "the wind was in the North, and I had no "cloak?"

They fled towards Cronſtadt as faſt as oars and ſails would carry them; but ſince the anſwer of the aid-de-camp, a great change had taken place in that town. In the tumultuous council that had been held at Peterſbourg in the morning, in the very heart of the inſurrection, Cronſtadt was long forgotten. It was a young German officer, who firſt mentioned its name; and this ſingle word procured him a juſt recom-

recompence. Vice-admiral Talizine, a Ruſſian, undertook to go to that town, and departed alone in a ſloop. He forbade his ſailors, under pain of death, to ſay from whence he came. On his arrival at Cronſtadt, the governor, who had iſſued orders that nobody ſhould be admitted without his conſent, came himſelf to meet him; and ſeeing him alone, ſuffered him to land. He aſked what news there was? Talizine replied, "He knew none; that he had heard it ſaid, "at his country-ſeat, where he was then "reſident, that there was an inſurrection at "Peterſbourg; and that as his poſt was at "the fleet, he had inſtantly come to join "it." The governor believed him; but as ſoon as he had departed, Talizine collected together ſome ſoldiers, propoſed to them to put that man under arreſt, and ſaid, "The "Emperor was dethroned; that they ought "to make a merit of giving up Cronſtadt

"to

" to the Empreſs, and then their fortune " would be ſecure." They followed his advice. He put the governor under arreſt; and having aſſembled the garriſon and the marines, he harangued them, and adminiſtered the oath of fidelity to the Empreſs. The two Imperial galleys were already ſeen at a diſtance; and Talizine, having thus made himſelf maſter of the town by this bold ſtroke, perceived that the ſight alone of the Emperor might again throw all into danger; and that it was neceſſary to ſecure the minds of men by vigorous exertion. Immediately, by his orders, the alarm-bell was rung in the town; the whole garriſon was on the ramparts ready to fire; two hundred lighted matches were at the touch-hole of as many cannons. About ten o'clock at night, the Emperor's yacht arrived; and they were prparing to land. They cried out, " Who goes there."—" The Emperor."

—" There is no Emperor." At this terrible word he aroſe and advanced; and opening his cloak, to ſhow the inſignia of his order, he ſaid, " It is I; recollect me;" and was preparing to diſembark. The ſentinels, and the whole guard, preſented their bayonets; the commander threatened to fire, unleſs they retreated; the Emperor fell into the arms of his followers, and Talizine, from the harbour, cried out to the two yachts to retire, or elſe the cannon ſhould be fired on them. The whole multitude repeated, " Let " the galleys retire, let the galleys retire," with ſo much rage, that the captain, within reach of the bullets which were about to cruſh him, took a ſpeaking-trumpet, and cried out, " We will retire directly; let us " have time to get off;" and in order to facilitate the flight, he ordered the cables to be cut. At the ſound of the trumpet there was a horrible ſilence in the town; and on

the

the departure of the galleys, a ſtill more horrible cry of, " Long live the Empreſs Ca-
" therine." As they fled, rowing with all their might, the Emperor exclaimed, with tears in his eyes, " The plot is general; I
" foreſaw this plot from the firſt day of my
" reign." He went down, half dead, into the cabin of the yacht, where his miſtreſs and her father alone followed him. The two veſſels ſtopped when they were out of the reach of the cannon; and receiving no orders, they reſted on their oars, ſtriking the water at intervals. The whole night, which was calm, was paſſed in this manner; Munick tranquilly remaining on deck, obſerving the beauty of the night; and ſo true is it that mirth may be united with terror, that ſome of the young women, as they themſelves have reported, ſaid, in a low voice, to each other, in the words of a comic proverb, " What are we going to do
" in this galley."

When

When all the Empreſs's troops had left the city, and were arranged in order for battle, it was too late for the army to proceed far on its march that day. The Princeſs, fatigued by the preceding night and ſuch a day, repoſed, for ſome hours, at a caſtle on the road. Upon her arrival at that place, ſhe aſked for ſome refreſhment, and offered part of it to ſome inferior officers, who were eager to ſerve her: ſhe ſaid to them, "I will "take nothing without ſharing it with you."

The army believed that they were marching againſt the Holſtein troops, which had been marſhalled before Peterhoff, but which, after the Emperor had embarked, had received orders to return to Oranienbaum, and Peterhoff was evacuated. In the mean time, the peaſants of the neighbouring villages, which the Emperor had ſent to collect, arrived armed with ſcythes and forks, and finding neither troops nor orders, waited in diſorder

diſorder to learn what was expected from them, under the command of the huſſars who had aſſembled them. Orlof, the firſt volunteer in the army, advanced about five in the morning to reconnoitre, and fell upon theſe poor people with blows of his ſabre, exclaiming, "Long live the Empreſs." They fled, throwing down their arms, and repeating, "Long live the Empreſs." The army then advanced, without obſtacle, as far as Peterhoff, and the Empreſs returned, as a ſovereign, to that caſtle, whence ſhe had eſcaped twenty-four hours previouſly.

In the interim, the Emperor, remaining on the water, and reduced from ſuch immenſe power, in ſo few hours, to two pleaſure yachts, the uſeleſs fortreſs of Oranienbaum, and ſome few ſpiritleſs foreign troops, without ammunition or proviſions, ſituate between a fleet ready to fire on him, an army in the higheſt fury of ſedition, and two towns

which

which rejected his authority, called Field-marſhal Munick, into the ſhip cabin, and ſaid to him, "Field-marſhal, I ought to have "followed your advice; but now do you, "who have ſeen ſo many extremities, tell "me what I can do." Munick replied, "That nothing was yet loſt; that he ought, "without a moment's delay, to row with all "ſpeed to Revel, and there embark in a man "of war, and ſet ſail for Pruſſia, where his "army was, and return to his dominions "with eighty thouſand men; and then he "would engage to reduce his empire to "ſubmiſſion in leſs than ſix weeks." The courtiers and young women entered at the ſame time with Munick, in order to hear, from his mouth, what hopes were left; they anſwered that the ſtrength of the rowers would not hold out ſo far as Revel. "Well "then," ſaid Munick, "we will row with "them." The whole court ſhuddered at

this propoſition; and whether flattery did not yet abandon this unfortunate prince, or that he was ſurrounded by treachery, (for how can their language be diſtinguiſhed?) they repreſented to him, "That he was very far from "being reduced to ſuch an extremity; that "it was not ſuitable to ſo powerful an Em-"peror to quit his dominions in a ſingle "veſſel; that it was not poſſible that the "whole nation had riſen againſt him; and "certainly all that was deſired by the inſur-"rection, was to reconcile him to his wife."

Peter reſolved to offer this reconciliation, and landed at Oranienbaum, like a man about to grant a pardon. But his domeſtics coming ſorrowfully to receive him on the ſhore, he ſaid to them, "My children, I "am no longer any thing;" and their conſternation again excited all his own. He learned from them, that the Empreſs's army was already at hand; and immediately he ordered

ordered the fleeteſt of his horſes to be ſecretly ſaddled, being reſolved to fly alone and diſguiſed, and to make for Poland. But the agitation of his mind ſoon throwing him back into indeciſion, his miſtreſs, ſeduced by the hope of finding an aſylum, and perhaps at the ſame time a throne for herſelf, perſuaded him to ſend to aſk permiſſion of the Empreſs for them to retire together into the dutchy of Holſtein. This was, according to her, yielding every thing to the Empreſs, who could deſire nothing more than an arrangement ſo favourable to her ambition; and if the Emperor's domeſtics cried out, "Our "father, ſhe will put you to death;" his miſtreſs replied, "Why would you wiſh to "alarm your maſter?"

This was his final reſolution; and immediately, as, according to general repreſentation, the only mode of avoiding the firſt fury of the ſoldiers was not to make any re-

ſiſtance, he ordered them to diſmantle every thing which could make the leaſt defence, and to diſmount the cannon; he diſmiſſed the ſoldiers, and commanded them to lay down their arms. At this ſpectacle, Munick, full of indignation, aſked, "If he did not "know how to die like an Emperor, at the "head of his troops? If you are afraid of "a ſabre," ſaid he, "take a crucifix in your "hand, they will not dare to touch you; "and as for me, I will conduct the fight." The Emperor perſiſted in his reſolution. He wrote to his wife, that he gave up the Ruſſian empire to her, and demanded permiſſion to retire into Holſtein with the frail Woronſof, and his aid-de-camp Goudowitz.

The chamberlain, whom he appointed Generaliſſimo, was entruſted with this letter; and at the ſame time, all the Prince's courtiers, who could procure ſmall veſſels, threw themſelves into them, and haſtening to

deſert

deſert him, went to augment the new court.

The Empreſs ſent for anſwer a renunciation for him to ſign, couched in the following terms:

" During the ſhort time of my abſolute " reign over the empire of Ruſſia, I have diſ- " covered that my ſtrength is not ſufficient for " ſuch a burden; and that to govern ſuch an " empire either as a ſovereign, or in any other " manner, is beyond my abilities; I have " likewiſe foreſeen the ſhock it would re- " ceive, which would have been followed " by its total ruin, and would have covered " me with eternal diſgrace: After having " therefore deliberately reflected on the " ſubject, I declare ſolemnly, and without " conſtraint, to the Ruſſian empire and the " whole univerſe, that I renounce for my " life the government of the aforeſaid em-

" pire, not wiſhing to reign over it either " as ſovereign or under any other form of " government, and without aſpiring to be " reinſtated by any aſſiſtance I may be able " to attain. To the truth of this I make " oath before God and the univerſe, having " written and ſigned this renunciation with " my own hand."

What remained to be apprehended from a man who diſgraced himſelf ſo far as to tranſcribe and ſign ſuch a paper? Or what muſt be thought of a nation, in which this man would be ſtill feared?

The ſame chamberlain, after having carried the renunciation to the Empreſs, came back and diſarmed the Holſtein ſoldiers, who ſurrendered their arms with indignation, and were confined in barns. He then handed the Emperor, his miſtreſs, and his favourite into a carriage, and drove them without any eſcort to Peterhoff.

Peter,

Peter, when he thus put himſelf into the hands of his wife, was not without hope. The firſt troops he met had never ſeen him: they were thoſe three thouſand Coſſacks which hazard alone had brought to this tranſaction; they preſerved a profound ſilence, and the emotion which he could not ſuppreſs on their appearance, gave them no trouble. But as ſoon as the army perceived him, the unanimous cries of "Long live the "Empreſs" began on all ſides. He paſſed through the regiments amidſt this new acclamation repeated with fury. It deprived him of his ſenſes. When they arrived at the great ſtair-caſe, his miſtreſs was carried off as ſhe alighted from the carriage by ſome ſoldiers who tore off her ſaſh. His favourite was beſet with cries of deriſion, while he replied to the ſoldiers with haughtineſs, and reproached them with their crime. The Emperor aſcended alone in a paroxyſm of rage.

They told him to undreſs himſelf, and none of theſe rebels laying his hands on his perſon, he himſelf ſtripped off his ribband, his ſword, and his coat, ſaying: " I am now " in your hands." He was left for ſome minutes in his ſhirt, and with naked feet expoſed to the laughter of his ſoldiers. Thus was Peter for ever ſeparated from his miſtreſs and his favourite; and a few moments after, all theſe were hurried away on different ſides under a ſtrong guard.

The city of Peterſbourg had been left in expectation of the event ſince the departure of the Empreſs; they were twenty-four hours without receiving any intelligence; and it was already diſcovered, by the various reports which were circulated, that on the ſlighteſt hopes, the Emperor would ſtill have had ſome partizans there. The foreigners were not without alarm, knowing that the true Ruſſians, deteſting the new

manners

manners and every thing which came from other countries, have ſometimes demanded of their ſovereigns as a recompence, permiſſion to maſſacre the foreigners; and whatever might be the event, they dreaded the licentiouſneſs and rage of the ſoldiers. About five in the evening, a diſtant noiſe of cannon was heard; the attention to it was general. They ſoon diſtinguiſhed, by the equal intervals of each report, that they were firing a feu-de-joie; the event was conjectured; and from that moment every mind was in the ſame diſpoſition.

The Empreſs ſlept at Peterhoff, and when ſhe roſe the next morning, her ancient confidants, who had deſerted her in her misfortune; the young women who had always followed the Emperor; and the courtiers, who, the better to govern the Prince, foſtered for ſo many years his hatred againſt his wife, came all together to proſtrate themſelves

themſelves before her. A great number of them were the relations of the frail Woronſof; and when the Princeſs of Aſchekof, her ſiſter, ſaw them on the ground, ſhe threw herſelf on her knees with them, ſaying: "Madam, behold my family, whom "I have ſacrificed to you." The Empreſs received them with the moſt ſeducing indulgence. In their preſence ſhe preſented the Princeſs with her ſiſter's ſaſh and jewels. Munick was in the crowd; ſhe ſaid to him; "You wiſhed to fight againſt me." He replied: "Yes, and now it is my duty to "fight for you." She manifeſted ſo much eſteem and regard for him, that he, admiring the genius of the Princeſs, ſoon offered to communicate to her, in a ſeries of converſations, all the knowledge he had acquired of all the parts of that vaſt empire during the great number of years he had paſſed in the practice of the arts and of war, in the exer-

ciſe

ciſe of the miniſterial functions, and in exile; either that he was affected by this unexpected and generous reception, or, as it was believed, that his ambition made this further effort.

On the ſame day they returned to the city in triumph, and the ſoldiers were kept under as good diſcipline in their joy, as they had been in the inſurrection.

The Empreſs was a little over-heated; and an ebullition of blood had covered her ſkin with ſmall red ſpots. She paſſed ſeveral days under a cooling regimen. This new court formed a ſpectacle worthy of attention; their joy at ſuch great ſucceſs did not prevent them being on their guard againſt every thing; the moſt exact regularity was obſerved in the midſt of the diſorder, in which the courtiers ſought an opportunity of regaining, from their knowledge of courts, their advantage over thoſe impetuous

impetuous conſpirators, who were proud of the ſervices they had juſt done; and the rank which each held in his ſovereign's favour not being yet aſcertained, every one wiſhed to appear what he deſired to become. It was in their early days, that the Princeſs of Aſchekof, entering rather too familiarly into the Empreſs's apartment, perceived with ſurpriſe Orlof on a ſettee, with a naked leg, which the Empreſs herſelf was dreſſing for a contuſion he had received on it. The Princeſs expoſtulated with her on ſuch an exceſs of kindneſs; and ſoon being better informed aſſumed, the tone of a rigid cenſor. Her projects of freedom, her eagerneſs to intermeddle with the affairs of ſtate, together with what ſhe learned from foreign countries, in all parts of which the honour of the conſpiracy was attributed to her; while Catherine was deſirous of appearing to have been elected,

and

and had probably perſuaded herſelf that ſhe was: in ſhort, all her conduct was diſpleaſing; and her diſgrace was already determined, on the very days of the ſplendid favours beſtowed on her from motives of decency.

Orlof ſoon fixed the general attention. That tender familiarity, which is the conſequence of an ancient intimacy, was remarked between the Empreſs and that man, who had been hitherto unknown. The aſtoniſhment of the court was extreme. The nobles, a great number of whom imagined that they had acquired rights over their ſovereign's heart, had not conceived it poſſible that this rival, notwithſtanding even his obſcurity, could have eſcaped their notice, and they ſaw with the greateſt chagrin, that they had laboured only for his elevation. Whether it proceeded from his own effrontery, or from a deſign of ſilencing his rivals, or whether it had been concerted with his miſtreſs, for the purpoſe

purpoſe of juſtifying the greatneſs which ſhe deſtined for him, he dared to ſay at a public dinner, " That he was abſolute maſter of " the guards, and that he had only to wiſh " it, and he could dethrone her." All the ſpectators were offended, and ſome replied with indignation; but ſuch good ſervants were bad courtiers: they were ruined, and Orlof's ambition knew no bounds.

The city of Moſcow, the capital of the empire, received the intelligence of the revolution, in a manner which gave much uneaſineſs. The Muſcovite nation really reſided in that city; Peterſbourg being only the habitation of the court. Five regiments compoſed the garriſon; and the governor gave to each ſoldier twenty charges, and aſſembled them on the great ſquare of the ancient palace of the Czars, an old citadel, called the Cremeline, built about four centuries back, and the firſt cradle of the Muſcovite

power. He ſummoned the whole people, who, alarmed at the diſtribution of cartridges, but attracted by curioſity, haſtened thither from all parts, and entered in as great crowds as the fortreſs would permit. Then the governor read, with a loud voice, the manifeſto, in which the Empreſs announced her acceſſion and her huſband's fall; and when he had finiſhed reading, he exclaimed, "Long live the Empreſs Catharine II.;" but the whold crowd and the five regiments preſerved a profound ſilence. He again uttered the ſame exclamation; the ſame ſilence continued. He was interrupted only by a ſullen murmur among the ſoldiers, who grumbled among themſelves, that the regiments of the guards had diſpoſed of the throne at their pleaſure. The governor earneſtly preſſed the officers who were round him to join in the cry; they began together the exclamation of, "Long live the Empreſs," trembling

trembling through fear of being maſſacred by the ſoldiers and people; and immediately he diſmiſſed the troops.

Six days had paſſed ſince the revolution, and this great event appeared to be terminated, without any odious impreſſions being left by any violence. Peter was guarded in an agreeable houſe named Robſchak, ſix leagues from Peterſbourg. On the road he aſked for ſome cards, and conſtructed with them a ſort of fortreſs, ſaying, "I ſhall never "in my life ſee one again." On his arrival at the country houſe he aſked for his violin, his dog, and his negro.

But the ſoldiers were aſtoniſhed at what they had done; they could not conceive by what enchantment they had been induced to dethrone the grandſon of Peter the Great, to give his crown to a German. The greater part, without plan and without ideas, had been led on by the motion of the others; and

and each, having returned to their low condition, after the pleaſure of diſpoſing of a crown had vaniſhed, felt nothing but remorſe. The ſailors, who had not been intereſted in the revolt, publicly reproached the guards in the taverns, with having ſold their Emperor for beer. The voice of pity, which juſtifies even the greateſt criminals, was heard in every heart. One night, a troop of ſoldiers, attached to the Empreſs, was in commotion through a vain fear, exclaiming, "their Mother was in danger." It was neceſſary to wake her, that they might ſee her. The following night there was a freſh diſturbance ſtill more dangerous. Whilſt the Emperor's life left a pretext for this diſquietude, it was thought there would be no tranquillity.

One of the Counts Orlof, for from the firſt day that title had been given to them, that very ſoldier, ſurnamed the *Scarred*, who had

 ſuppreſſed

ſuppreſſed the Princeſs of Aſchekof's letter, and a man of the name of Teplof, who had riſen from the loweſt employs, by the ſingular art of ſupplanting his competitors, went together towards the Emperor's reſidence: they informed him that they were come to dine with him; and, according to the Ruſſian cuſtom, glaſſes of brandy were brought before the repaſt. That which the Emperor drank was a glaſs of poiſon. Whether they were in haſte to report this news, or whether the horror of the action made them too precipitate, they invited him a moment after to take a ſecond glaſs. His entrails were already burning, and the ferocity of their countenances rendering them ſuſpected, he refuſed the glaſs: they employed force to compel him to take it, and he to repulſe them. In this horrible ſtruggle, in order to ſtifle his outcries, which began to be heard at a diſtance, they precipitated themſelves on him,

ſeized

ſeized him by the throat, and threw him down; but as he defended himſelf with all the ſtrength which the extremity of deſpair ſupplies, and as they avoided giving him any wound, being reduced to fear for themſelves, they called to their aſſiſtance two officers of his guard, who at that moment were without at the gate of his priſon. One of them was the youngeſt of the Princes Baratinſki, and the other a man of the name of Potemkine, about ſeventeen years of age. They had ſhowed ſo much zeal in the conſpiracy, that in ſpite of their extreme youth they had been appointed his guards; they haſtened in, and three of theſe murderers tied and faſtened a napkin round the neck of the unfortunate Emperor, whilſt Orlof preſſed on his cheſt with his two knees, and almoſt ſtifled him; in this manner they ſtrangled him, and he remained lifeleſs in their hands.

It is not known with certainty what ſhare the Empreſs had in this tranſaction; but it is a fact well aſcertained, that on the very day on which it happened, this Princeſs beginning her dinner with much gaiety, ſaw this Orlof enter with his hair diſhevelled, covered with duſt and ſweat, his cloaths torn, his countenance agitated, and full of horror and precipitation. As he entered, his eyes, wild and ſparkling, ſought the eyes of the Empreſs. She roſe in ſilence, and went into a cloſet, where he followed her; a few moments after ſhe ſent for Count Panine, who had already been appointed Prime Miniſter; ſhe informed him that the Emperor was dead, and conſulted him on the beſt mode of announcing his death to the public. Panine adviſed her to let one night elapſe, and to publiſh the intelligence on the morning, as if ſhe had received it during the night. This advice was

adopted,

adopted, and the Empreſs returned with the ſame countenance, and continued her dinner with the ſame gaiety. The next day, when it was reported that Peter had died of an hæmorrhoidal colic, ſhe appeared bathed in tears, and publiſhed her ſorrow in an edict.

The body was brought to Peterſbourg, in order to be expoſed. The face was black, and the neck mangled. In ſpite of theſe horrible marks, they left him three days expoſed to the view of the people, in the dreſs only of a Holſtein officer, for the purpoſe of quelling the commotions which began to be apprehended, and of preventing impoſtors from diſturbing the Empire one day under his name. His ſoldiers, ſet at liberty, but diſarmed, mingled with the crowd, and regarded their ſovereign with an air full of pity, contempt, and a ſort of regret mixed with ſhame.

They were ſoon embarked to return to their country; but, as a ſequel to their cruel fate, almoſt all thoſe unfortunate men periſhed in a ſtorm. Some few ſaved themſelves on the rocks near the coaſt; but they were drowned, whilſt the Governor of Cronſtadt ſent to Peterſbourg to know if he was permitted to aſſiſt them.

The Empreſs haſtened to ſend all the relations of the deceaſed Emperor to Holſtein; but ſhe ſent them back with honour, and even entruſted the adminiſtration of that Dutchy to Prince George. Biren, who had ceded to that Prince his right to the Dutchy of Courland, ſaw himſelf re-eſtabliſhed in his pretenſions by this removal; and the Empreſs wiſhing to deſtroy the reigning Prince, who was deſirous of ruling alone, in order that ſhe might have no obſtacles to her deſigns on Poland, and not knowing what to

do

do at her court with ſuch a man as Biren, ſent him to reign in that ſovereignty. Upon the news of the revolution, Poniatowſki, thinking he was now at liberty, wiſhed to haſten to her; but reſtrained by more prudent counſels, he only went to the frontiers, where he every moment expected to receive permiſſion to go to Peterſbourg. He had exhibited ſince his departure the moſt conſtant paſſion; a very ſingular trait of his love may be cited. This young man, leaving Ruſſia precipitately, and without being able to procure a portrait of his miſtreſs, in a country where the arts are not well cultivated, had the good fortune to get a perfect likeneſs of her painted from his memory, and, if we may ſo ſay, while he dictated it. She contrived, by flattering his paſſion, to keep him always at a diſtance, and ſoon employed the Ruſſian armies, which deſired on all occaſions to reſide in Poland, in procuring the

crown for him; ſhe engaged her brother, the Prince of Anhalt-Zerbſt, to ſerve for the future no other power; but ſhe kept him at a diſtance from her court, avoiding with the greateſt care every thing which could remind the Ruſſians of her being a foreigner; and excite an apprehenſion that they would again be ſubject to the German yoke. Every ſovereign haſtened to acknowledge her: the Emperor of China alone, who had extenſive frontiers in common with Ruſſia, refuſed to receive her ambaſſadors, and returned for anſwer that he would neither have alliance, commerce, or any communication with her.

One of her firſt cares was to recall the ancient Chancellor Beſtuchef, who being then honoured by his exile itſelf, filled the whole court with his portraits, in the habit of diſgrace. She puniſhed, but not ſeverely, Breſſan the Frenchman, who had ſent intelligence to the Emperor. She left him the

poſſeſſion

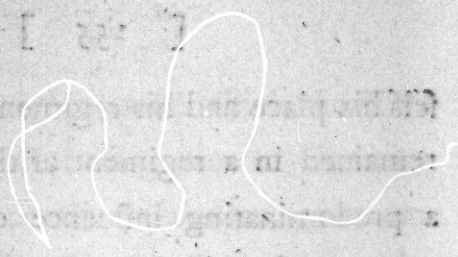
poſſeſſion of all his fortune, and appeared to deprive him of the ribband of the third order of the empire, as a ſatisfaction only to the jealouſy of the courtiers. She did not delay letting Count Schouvalof know that he muſt retire, and with a cruel ſarcaſm preſented this favourite of the late Empreſs, with an old negro buffoon, the favourite of the deceaſed Emperor. After having begun to re-eſtabliſh order in all parts of her dominions, ſhe went to Moſcow to be crowned in the chapel of the ancient Czars. That capital beheld her without zeal and without joy. As ſhe paſſed through the ſtreets the people retired, but her ſon was always ſurrounded by a crowd. There were even plots formed againſt her. Odart, the Piedmonteſe, was the informer; he betrayed all his old friends, who, already diſcontented with the Empreſs, entered into theſe new conſpiracies; he aſked only money as a recompence.

pence. To every propoſal which the Empreſs made him of raiſing him to dignities, he conſtantly replied, " Madam, give me " money;" and as ſoon as had obtained it, he returned to his country.

She recalled, at the end of ſix months, to her court, that Goudowitz, who had ſhown ſo much attachment to the Emperor; and his fidelity was rewarded by the advances of the moſt beautiful women. She granted the frail Woronſof, her unworthy rival, permiſſion to go to Moſcow to her family, where ſhe found her ſiſter, the Princeſs of Aſchekof, who obtained nothing from ſo great a tranſaction, but a pregnancy, a ſullen melancholy, and a ſad knowledge of mankind.

The whole ſafety of the reign appeared to be truſted to the hands, to the ſingle hands of Orlof. That favourite did not long delay the ſubverſion of Villebois, the grand-maſter of the artillery, and obtained for himſelf

ſelf his place and his regiment. The *Scarred* remained in a regiment of the guards, with a predominating influence over the whole corps, and a third brother had the firſt ſeat in the ſenate. A bloody cataſtrophe having terminated the days of the unfortunate Ivan, the Empreſs on her throne had no one to fear but her own ſon, againſt whom ſhe ſeemed to be able to ſecure herſelf, by truſting the principal adminiſtration of affairs to Count Panine, who ſtill had the care of the Prince's education. The credit of this miniſter ſerving as a counterpoiſe to Orlof's power, the court was divided into two parties, the remains of the two conſpiracies; and the Empreſs, between the two, governed by herſelf with ſo much glory, that the ſame of her reign attracted a great number of people from Europe and Aſia into her dominions.



A

SECOND LETTER

TO THE

COUNTESS OF EGMONT*.

MADAM,

SOME perſons have expreſſed doubts as to the veracity of this Hiſtory. This ſpecies of criticiſm is the only one which an hiſtorian is under an obligation to refute, and I look upon it as a duty to juſtify in your eyes, the protection you have condeſcended to give to this work.

Permit me, Madam, to recall ſome facts to your recollection. On the firſt report of the exiſtence of this Hiſtory, ſeveral perſons in correſpondence with the Empreſs of

* The Firſt Letter to the Counteſs is made uſe of as a Preface to this Hiſtory.

Ruſſia,

Ruſſia, felt an alarm for her honour. You know their conduct; and it being found impoſſible to induce me to accept their offers, every day becoming more conſiderable, one of them imagined that ſhe ſhould employ your authority to prevail on me to comply; but I can ſay with perfect ſafety, like Gracchus's friend, " If ſhe had commanded " me, I ſhould have obeyed." What was the reſult of thoſe attempts? The certainty which you obtained, that you had in your hands the depoſition of an incorruptible witneſs.

This work was compoſed for you only, Madam; none of thoſe great motives which may engage a courageous man to publiſh unknown anecdotes, excited me to take up the pen, and ſtill leſs did an indiſcreet love of truth, or any partiality or intrigue. I could, without weakneſs and remorſe, have ſacrificed it to my quiet, if I had had any

reaſon

reaſon to apprehend that my quiet would have been endangered; but I felt an invincible repugnance to ſacrifice it to any other intereſt. I regarded with horror the ignominy attached even at the preſent day, to the name of that writer, who in the fifteenth century ſold his ſilence to the Princes of his time. The ſeducers were not eaſily diſcouraged; they imagined that the vanity of an author was ſtronger in me than intereſt, and that it was neceſſary to tempt me by thoſe two paſſions united. They ſuffered me to conceive a poſſibility of publiſhing this writing, if I altered ſome of the facts, or permitted them to be altered without complaining. Indignation dictated my reply, and I broke off all acquaintance with ſuch negotiators. All theſe circumſtances are known to you, Madam, and to the Count of Egmont. What can thoſe put in oppoſition to them, who labour to perſuade themſelves that this narrative is a

romance? Would a man, capable of inventing or falſifying the Anecdotes contained in this Hiſtory at his pleaſure, have obſerved ſuch a conduct? and has he not a better principle than the love of a writer of romances for his inventions?

The peruſal of this work ſoon appeaſed the anxiety which the firſt report of its exiſtence had cauſed. I owed a ſingular advantage to the extreme impartiality of the relation. The partizans of the Empreſs of Ruſſia, and thoſe who did not look on her with a favourable eye, have equally found in its peruſal, reaſon to confirm their opinions, and I have been defended in her preſence by her moſt decided adherents.

But what are the criticiſms on which this accuſation has been founded? Here follows one of thoſe which has been the moſt frequently repeated: The proverb, "What "are we going to do in this galley," is, they

they ſay, a pleaſantry purely French, and could never have been in the mouth of Ruſſian ladies. The authors of this grave obſervation have proved only that they know neither Ruſſia nor the Ruſſians, ſince they do not know that our comedies are played every day at Peterſbourg, and in our own language.

I reported that piece of pleaſantry, becauſe it ſerves to paint characters and manners: but there is another which I permitted myſelf to recite on the ſuſpected connection with Poniatowſki; and I confeſs, that this has, at firſt ſight, more the appearance of belonging to the hiſtorian than to the hiſtory; it looks more like an imitation of Petronius than of Tacitus: you yourſelf proſcribed that ſportive anecdote. I dare, however, undertake its defence, even in oppoſition to yourſelf, by introducing the young Pole on the ſtage: it was neceſſary to announce that

a crown would be the price of this adventure, for the purpoſe of ennobling the relation of an adventure of gallantry, and fixing the reader's attention. But the great elevation to which Count Poniatowſki has in fact been raiſed, muſt have inſpired the higheſt notion of him; and muſt have excited expectations of an intereſt in the ſequel of the narration, which would have had him alone for its object. One of the greateſt advantages of the familiar ſtyle which I have adopted, is the capacity of employing on ſuch occaſions, jokes and pleaſantry, leaving the perſon in his original mediocrity, at the ſame time that I announced the importance of the recital.

I might diſcuſs the motives which have induced a ſmall number of perſons to labour to make the hiſtory ſuſpected; I might ſhow that the moſt dangerous of my critics, I ſay the moſt dangerous, becauſe he was the moſt powerful, knew neither Ruſſia nor the Ruſſians,

Ruſſians, nor even this work. I might alſo, after the example of the ancients, aſſert, that a man worthy of credit, and who does not fear to publiſh his name, has the inconteſtable right of being looked on as an authority, with regard to the events of which he has been an eye-witneſs, and all the circumſtances of which he has collected on the very ſpot where they happened. But if more authorities are wiſhed, I ſhall be embarraſſed only by the number.

In fact, amongſt the various recitals of this hiſtory, which I felt myſelf under the neceſſity of making, all thoſe at which perſons well informed on theſe events were preſent, far from procuring the ſlighteſt contradiction, ſupplied me, on the contrary, with new authorities.

I will not remind you, Madam, that I read it in your preſence to the Duke de Choiſeul, a man the beſt informed of every thing paſſing in Europe during his adminiſtration,

niſtration, and to the Baron de Breteuil, who more than once was perſonally pointed out, and to whom Odart, the Piedmonteſe, addreſſed the ſtrange diſcourſe which I have reported; in a word, who was acquainted with all the perſons and facts of which I have ſpoken.

To cite the teſtimony of the King of Sweden on a revolution, would be to cite the authority of a maſter; he is more ſkilful on this ſubject than any of my critics. But what is ſtill more eſſential to the proofs which I wiſh to diſcuſs, the late King his father had been the tutor of Peter the Third, and afterwards was indebted to him for the throne; the court of Sweden was the only one that had the generoſity to put on mourning for the death of that unfortunate Emperor. A tie of gratitude and policy made them very attentive to that event. That Prince, who, during his reſidence at Paris, was connected with you,

you, Madam, by an intimate friendſhip, which does equal honour to you both, told me in the preſence of the Count of Creutz, who is ſtill his ambaſſador in France, and of the Count of Lewenhaup, a field marſhal in the ſervice of France, that the relation ſent to the ſenate of Sweden, was perfectly conformable to my narrative. He informed me that the King his father had himſelf choſen the two virtuous men of whom I have ſpoken, to be the inſtructors of Peter the Third. He added, that at the time of this appointment, there was no appearance that Peter would ever be invited into Ruſſia; that the houſe of Holſtein expected to ſee him aſcend the throne of Sweden, and that with the deſign of more eaſily obtaining the ſuffrages of the Swediſh nation, his education had been directed to republican manners. He alſo confirmed in an inconteſtable manner, all that I have ſaid of the Emperor's

education, and the mode in which I have attempted to explain the ſingularities of his character.

All hiſtory preſents us only with one character of the ſame deſcription. It is that of Antiochus Epiphanes, who, appearing ſometimes to forget his abſolute power, went about the ſtreets of Antioch ſoliciting the ſuffrages of the loweſt of the people, to raiſe him to ſome inferior magiſtracy, and who afterwards cauſed a curule chair to be brought into the public markets, in which he judged the quarrels of the meaneſt of the populace. He united, ſay the hiſtorians, the moſt pompous magnificence with the meaneſt arts of popularity; full of courage, warlike talents, and a knowledge of the arts, he inceſſantly proſtituted his abilities, his knowledge, his rank, and his dignity, ſometimes in the ſhops, at others in the forges and workſhops, and in the vileſt of games, in which it was his

pleaſure

pleaſure to exhibit himſelf amidſt the moſt extraordinary pomp. He aſſumed by turns the manners and appearance of all conditions and all characters; ſo that neither himſelf nor any other perſon knew what ſort of a man he really was.

It is remarkable that this ſingular character may be explained preciſely in the ſame manner as I have explained that of the Emperor Peter the Third. That Aſiatic deſpot was a Greek by birth. He had in his youth reſided ſome time at Athens, and ſtill longer at Rome, were he was ſent as an hoſtage. Is it not probable that he acquired in thoſe two republics, that habit of equality, that ambition of diſtinguiſhing himſelf by his perſonal merit? Impreſſions received in his youth, preſerved in a weak mind, the conceptions of which were lively and quick, produced that ridiculous compound of reaſon, talent, and inſanity.

Antiochus Epiphanes and the Czar Peter the Third had both received an education on too great a ſcale for their genius: that is not in general the misfortune to which princes are expoſed in their infancy. It appears to me certain, that the apparent contradictions of every character might thus be explained, if we could diſcover in the generality of men, what has made the ſtrongeſt impreſſion on them in their earlieſt years.

I return to freſh teſtimonies, with which it is eaſy for me to confirm my relation. The Count of Vielhorſki, who is ſtill in France, filling with zeal and wiſdom the difficult office of envoy from the confederation of Poland, was preſent when his Royal Highneſs Prince Charles of Saxony, the Duke of Courland, heard the narration read. He was perſonally intereſted in being faithfully informed of all the intrigues of the court of Ruſſia. His crown, as the event has proved,

depended

depended on it. He was at Peterhoff that very night in which Peter the Third ſurpriſed Poniatowſki on the point of entering into the apartment of the Great Dutcheſs. He dined the ſame day with the two reconciled parties; and he poſitively certified the truth of that anecdote, and of all thoſe which are contained in the firſt part of the Hiſtory.

I have, however, and I frankly confeſs it, diſcovered a conſiderable variation in another narrative of this anecdote. I have it from a man who pretends that he played an important part in it. This man is Count Braneki, the friend, confidant, and defender of the King of Poland. According to him, the reſentment of the Great Duke was not eaſily appeaſed. After having releaſed Count Poniatowſki, he not only inſiſted on his being baniſhed the court with ignominy, but wiſhed to procure a divorce from the Great

Dutcheſs, and to ſhut her up in a convent He had her conducted to a ſmall houſe near Oranienbaum, where he kept her priſoner. The ſentinels placed round her had orders to let none approach, but a certain number of courtiers devoted to the Great Duke. That Prince, jealous and irritated, was himſelf in the houſe, and breathed nothing but vengeance.

Count Braneki, as he ſays, undertook to ſave the Great Dutcheſs. A continual rivalry, as to all the advantages of ſociety, had involved him in an open quarrel with Count Poniatowſki in Poland. They behaved with extreme coldneſs to each other at Peterſbourg. Braneki came to that court in the ſuite of Prince Charles; and this was a new reaſon for the diſtance kept up between theſe two young Poles, ſince Prince Charles laboured hard for the recall of Count Poniatowſki, whoſe intrigues diſturbed the houſe

houſe of Saxony. Braneki, however, did not think it right to ſecond the reſtleſs attempts of that houſe againſt the fortune of a young nobleman, his fellow-citizen and equal; but accuſtomed, from his infancy, to be the rival of Poniatowſki, he endeavoured to make himſelf more agreeable than the latter to the Great Dutcheſs. He hoped to find an opportunity, by paying an aſſiduous court to the Great Duke. He entertained that Prince with accounts of ſieges and combats, and with plans of battle. A ſingle campaign, the only one which his youth had permitted him to make, afforded him the capacity of talking ſcientifically enough to pleaſe the Great Duke, who often carried him to his little fortreſs, commanded him at the exerciſe, and conſulted him in all his military deſigns. Braneki, learning what had happened at Peterhoff, and the dangers to which the Great Dutcheſs was expoſed,

went

went to ſeek for Poniatowſki; the latter eſcaped from this unfortunate rencontre, and returning to Peterſbourg, waited in conſternation for the deciſion of his fate; and adopted no plan. Brancki adviſed him to begin by writing to the Great Duke's miſtreſs; and this letter being written, the effect of which would be to intereſt the Great Duke's mind in his favour, he propoſed to conduct him to the Prince, in the pavilion where the Great Dutcheſs was confined. The ſtep was a bold one; and Braneki's temerity prevailed over the timid circumſpection of his happy rival. The two young Poles then ſet out on their journey by by-roads. As they approached the pavilion, Poniatowſki concealed himſelf in the thickeſt of the wood. Braneki advanced alone, whatever it might coſt him to appear on a ſudden before the Great Duke, without being announced, determined to kill, if it ſhould

ſhould be neceſſary, every ſentinel who ſhould oppoſe his paſſage. He was more fortunate; and appeared ſuddenly, as he wiſhed, before the Great Duke. The Prince, aſtoniſhed, aſked how he procured admittance. By ſtratagems of war, ſaid Brancki; and immediately began to relate the ſtratagems which he pretended to have employed to deceive the ſentinels. His diſcourſe and his audacity charmed the Great Duke's mind; and Braneki, after having diſcontinued this narrative, laid hold on that moment to repreſent to him, how unjuſt it would be to ruin the Great Dutcheſs for the folly of a young man; who, perhaps, was enamoured of her without being beloved: in a word, he led him to conſent to recall Count Poniatowſki, and engaged him to lead the Count to the Great Dutcheſs, to aſk her pardon for his fooliſh attempt of the preceding night.

Braneki

Braneki adds, that he himſelf had ſhortly after an interview with the Great Dutcheſs. He told her, " That it was not Count " Poniatowſki but her that he meant to " ſerve; and with ſentiments very oppoſite " to any deſign of ſerving the Count." He made her, on that occaſion, declarations replete with gallantry and paſſion, which were neither received nor rejected; and he regards that adventure as the ſource of the elevated fortune to which he was raiſed during the troubles of his country; and which leaves at preſent no object of his ambition but the throne.

This recital, which I have from Count Braneki, ſuppoſing it to be exactly true, does not contradict, if it is examined with attention, that which I have related on the authority of eye-witneſſes and of the Empreſs's confidants, and on the teſtimony of the favourite who then governed the empire.

Peter

Peter was not a man to continue long in the ſame reſolution. It is poſſible, that after having promiſed to prevent the reports, which his jealouſy and anger, at the firſt, had given riſe to, from ſpreading, he again felt a return of his wrath, and of the deſire of vengeance; and where is the ſtoic who, on a ſimilar occaſion, would not have been ſubject to ſimilar mutability? The avowal which the Great Dutcheſs made to her huſband, in my narrative, is ſurely conſiſtent with her character. The mode adopted by Braneki, when he ſpoke to the Prince, neither is nor ought to be the ſame. I would voluntarily appeal, on this head, to all thoſe whom the chances of ſociety have placed in ſimilar ſituations.

I know not what weight the teſtimony of Odart, the Piedmonteſe, will have with my readers. I will not diſſemble that this Piedmonteſe, having returned to his country as he

he had announced, has lately been killed by a ſtroke of lightning. But before his death, the Chevalier d'Arci, of the Academy of Sciences, and M. de Trudaine, met him at Nice, which he had choſen for his retreat, and if we may ſpeak of him according to his own opinion, his conduct, at that time, was as reſpectable as his fortune. Both recollected this Hiſtory, and Odart's accounts gave full confirmation to it.

Some perſons, it is true, who knew the Princeſs of Aſchekof when on her travels, did not recollect in her the young Princeſs who had intereſted them in my narrative. I beg of them to obſerve, that ſhe is deſcribed at eighteen years of age; and I myſelf have announced, towards the concluſion, the alteration which her diſgrace produced on her. She already knows, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, what it is to be ſorrowfully undeceived, the ordinary reſult of long experience.

experience. She has loſt, at ſo tender an age, all the illuſions of fortune, friendſhip, and glory. Humiliation has ſubdued that ardent and generous character, which induced her to ſacrifice her family, which ſupplied her with enthuſiaſm and credulity; and which, on her firſt diſcontent with the Empreſs, made her openly ſay, " I thought " I was doing right, but I was miſtaken." The experience of a long diſgrace, and the horrible ſenſation of her ſlavery, has made her melancholy, without daring at preſent to ſhow her diſcontent. Such is ſhe at preſent. The ſame ardent paſſions which led her to the Caſernes, and induced her to aſſume the male habit, and march at the head of the troops, ſtill remain. I have no where ſpoken of her beauty. Her age, and ſhe poſſeſſed at that time all its brilliant advantages, ſtood in ſtead of it, at the period at which I have deſcribed her.

I could add many other facts to this letter, which is already too long; but nothing can convince thoſe who are not already convinced by what I have ſaid; and I believe that I have ſufficiently juſtified in your eyes a work which was begun under your auſpices.

I am, Madam,

With the profoundeſt Reſpect,

Your very humble

And obedient Servant,

RULHIERE.

PARIS,
Aug. 25, 1773.